SELECTIONS FROM THE BONPO BOOK OF THE DEAD

Collected and translated by John Myrdhin Reynolds

Bonpo Translation Project
Vidyadhara Institute for Studies in Comparative Religion
San Diego and Copenhagen

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PREFACE

The selected translations from the Bonpo tradition of Dzogchen presented here are part of my work in progress for translating all the relevant Tibetan texts from the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud collection. These translations are being published in two forthcoming volumes, Space, Awareness, and Energy: An Introduction to the Bonpo Dzogchen Teachings from Zhang-zhung, and The Six Lamps of the Heart of Enlightenment (Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca NY, 1998 and 1999). All of these translations were done over the years in collaboration with Lopon Tenzin Namdak, the leading Bonpo scholar and master of this tradition of Dzogchen outside of Tibet, to whom the translator extends his deep appreciation and grateful thanks. The commentaries that follow the translations are entirely my own.

In these commentaries which I provide to the translations, I elaborate upon the view of Dzogchen in relation to the Bardo experience, not only from the traditional Tibetan perspective found in the Tibetan commentaries, but also from the perspectives of Transpersonal Psychology and Comparative Religion. In terms of depth psychology, as well as the relationship between individual consciousness and the collective unconscious, I have found the writings of C.G. Jung and his followers, such as Erich Neumann, to be especially informative and stimulating in terms of unraveling the meaning of the various symbolizations that are employed in relation to consciousness. In terms of Comparative Religion, I have found the writings of Mircea Eliade to be especially insightful with regard to the distinction between the sacred and the profane, the symbolism of the center and of sacred space, and on the structure of time in ancient cultures.

Moreover, in discussing the Dzogchen understanding of Shunyata or emptiness as being the Kunzhi, the basis of everything, which represents the ultimate source and matrix of all the possible manifestations appearing in time and space, I have found David Bohm's elucidation of the holographic model of reality and the implicate order to be especially suggestive. The Dzogchen texts present Shunyata, not merely as emptiness or the void, but as a state of pure potentiality, which gives it a more positive perspective than is found in the Madhyamaka philosopy of Mahayana Buddhism. Shunyata, like the great cosmic ocean of myth that preceeded the creation of the world, is not only chaos and non-being (Skt. asat), but equally pure being (Skt. sat), the source of all possible manifestations of being. Not only individual lives, but entire universes emerge out of it and dissolve again into the state of Shunyata. It is, therefore, not just a state of emptiness or non-being, but a state of fullness and pure awareness, pregnant with infinite possibilities for knowledge and existence. In many ways, this more positive notion of Shunyata resemles the Upanishadic Brahman, but as the ground of being, Shunyata is not a substance or an entity. In terms of the Buddhist formulation, it can neither be said to exist nor not exist. It lacks any inherent existence and transcends the categories of the finite intellect.

Especially in my footnotes to the commentaries I have composed to the translations of the Tibetan texts, I have drawn on these perspectives to compare the Tibetan Books of the Dead with other spiritual traditions and mythologies elsewhere in the world. I believe that this comparative methodology can help elicit a whole range of meanings from the texts in question, which may not at first be obvious if one proceeds on purely philological grounds. Here I am primarily concerned with the hermeneutics of

consciousness and I have found the Dzogchen perspective on mind and consciousness to assist brilliantly in this endeavor.

Both Jung and Eliade believed in the psychic unity of humankind, despite a diversity of cultures. The same assumption is found in the Tibetan Book of the Dead and so it is suggested here that the profound insights of Dzogchen into the nature of the psyche and the mind, as well as into the processes of death and rebirth, can be applied elsewhere than in Tibetan culture. Moreover, this traditional wisdom may be applied even to our contemporary experiences. Despite all our advancement in technology and scientific theory in the West, we modern people still suffer death and the terror of death. That, indeed, is the bottom line. Perhaps the Tibetan Lamas, both Buddhist and Bonpo, do have something to teach us after all. I had thought so at least, which is what led me into these studies originally, not only as a scholar and translator, but even more as a participant and a practitioner.

In a sense, Tibetan society only recently emerged from the Middle Ages into the modern world, in 1959 with the completion of the Chinese Communist conquest of that ancient land. But we in the West should not think of Tibet as having been a static society over the centuries, or as merely a museum of Buddhist relics inherited from Medieval India. Before the coming of Indian Buddhism to Central Tibet in the seventh and eighth centuries of our era, Tibet had its own flourishing native religious culture known as Bon, which was not simply a primitive shamanism and animism, but a higher culture. In Western Tibet or Zhang-zhung, this culture was literate and in close contact with the Buddhist and Zoroastrian civilizations of Central Asia to the west. Even after the revival of Indian Buddhism in Tibet in the eleventh century, the Tibetan Lamas did not just slavishly imitate their Indian predecessors, but worked creatively with this inherited material from Buddhist India and expanded upon it. In the field of philosophy alone, developments were made over the inherited Indian models in logic and epistemology. But it was with Dzogchen and its particular ontological concerns that the Tibetan intellect, like the great Garuda itself, took flight and soared upward to unprecedented heights. Over the centuries Tibetan intellectual and spiritual culture evolved two over-arching philosophical syntheses. The first was the Gelugpa, which was founded on the writings of the illustrious master and scholar Je Tsongkhapa (14 cen.) and was centered in the great monastic universities of Central Tibet, such as Gendan, Drepung, Sera, and Tashilhungpo. This mighty intellectual edifice was built on foundations laid earlier by the Sakyapas and the Kadampas. The second great synthesis was that of the Rimed Movement of the last two centuries, centered largely in Kham or Eastern Tibet. Inspired by the works of the brilliant eighteenth century Dzogchen master Jigmed Lingpa, leading Lama scholars of the red hat schools of the Nyingmapas, the Sakyapas, and the Kagyudpas all contributed to the formation of this non-sectarian movement. In fact, the very terms Rimed (ris-med) and Rimedpa (ris-med-pa) mean "non-sectarian." And here we find the names of such illustrious Lamas as Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, Jamgon Kongtrul, Chogyur Lingpa, Jamgon Mipham, and even the Bonpo master Shardza Tashi Gyaltsan. And at the heart of this second synthesis or integration of all Buddhist and Bonpo thought, we find Dzogchen, universally regarded as the highest, most quintessential teaching of the Buddhas.

Because this material is still part of several works in progress, there may occur some repetitions in the commentaries I have appended to the translations and for this I request the reader's indulgence. The psychological and comparative religious aspects of this Tibetan material I will expand upon in a future study of the Tibetan Books of the Dead. Thus, much of this discussion is here relegated to the footnotes and to brief references.

The translator also wishes to extend his thanks to Chogyal Namkhai Norbu and to Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche who first introduced him to this particular tradition of Dzogchen some years ago. And also thanks are

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John Myrdhin Reynolds
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INTRODUCTION

There exist in Tibet two authentic lineage's of transmission of the Dzogchen teachings preserved among the oldest schools of Tibetan spirituality, the Nyingmapa and the Bonpo. In both of these schools of traditional wisdom, Dzogchen, the teachings of the Great Perfection, is ranked as the highest vehicle among the Nine Successive Vehicles to Enlightenment (theg-pa rim dgu) into which the transmissions of the Dharma are divided. There exist a number of Bonpo Dzogchen traditions, but all of them are Terma (gter-ma) or rediscovered treasure texts, except for the Dzogpa Chenpo Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud (rDzogs-pa chen-poi zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud), "The Oral Transmission from Zhang-zhung for the Great Perfection Teachings," [1] which represents a continuous oral transmission (snyan-rgyud) asserted to descend from the eighth century to our own time. For this reason, the tradition is of particular interest for the study of the historical development of Dzogchen thinking. The core of these teachings are the Upadeshas (man-ngag), or the brief secret oral instructions, given by the Dzogchen master Tapihritsa to his disciple Gyerpung Nangzher Lodpo (Gyer-spungs snang-bzher lod-po). [2] Both of these masters lived in the Mount Kailas region of Western Tibet, then known as Zhang-zhung. Up until the eighth century of our era, Zhang-zhung had been an independent kingdom with its own culture and language and which had close cultural connections with Central Asia and Afghanistan, both centers for a flourishing Buddhistic civilization. [3] The Bonpo Lamas themselves assert that the higher spiritual traditions of Bon, known as Sutra, Tantra, and Upadesha or Dzogchen, come to them, not from India, as is usually the case with the Tibetan Buddhist schools, but from Zhang-zhung, and more remotely from a region in Central Asia known as Tazik. [4] This region appears to correspond roughly to the modern Central Asian republics of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, where the religious culture is nowadays predominantly Islamic. However, before the Muslim conquests of this region in the eighth century, the religious culture of Central Asia was a fascinating mixture of Buddhist, Manichean, and native Iranian elements. [5]

According to the Lamas of the Bonpo tradition, the ultimate source of their higher spiritual teachings was a prehistoric Buddha known as Tonpa Shenrab Miwoche (sTon-pa gShen-rab mi-bo-che). [6] Tonpa Shenrab is considered by the Bonpos of Tibet, Nepal, and China to be a Buddha or enlightened being (sangs-rgyas) in the same way as the Indian Buddha Shakyamuni was an enlightened being. However, the former appeared much earlier in time and history, belonging to a line of legendary Buddhas of Central Asian origin who lived outside India. In the Indian Buddhist scriptures, as recorded in the Vinaya and the Sutras, this lineage is traced from Shakyamuni Buddha back to Dipankara Buddha, his twenty-fourth predecessor in this line. I have considered the historical questions raised here elsewhere. [7] The term Tonpa (ston-pa) means a spiritual teacher, particularly one who is the source of a revelation (bstan-pa) to humanity of a higher spiritual wisdom and who, thereby, becomes the founder of a spiritual tradition and lineage, in this case the Bon. The name Bon itself, as well as the term Bonpo, meaning a practitioner of Bon, is said by some scholars to come from the Old Tibetan verb 'bond-pa, meaning to invoke the gods or to evoke the spirits. But it is equally possible that, as suggested by other scholars, it comes from the Sogdian or Iranian Central Asian word BWN (pronounced bun) meaning "the Dharma." [8] Miwoche (mi-bo che) means a great man or human being and Rab means first, foremost, or supreme. Shen means Shenpo (gshen-po) or a practitioner of Shen (gshen), now interpreted as the higher spiritual teachings found within the Bon tradition. But this was also the title born by his clan. Some scholars believe the term Shen stands for a type of priest or ritual magician (Snellgrove), while others (Hoffman) suggest that it originally designated a shaman. [9] In any event, modern day Bonpos and their Lamas consider Tonpa Shenrab primarily as a Buddha or enlightened being who is the founder of their spiritual tradition. Only secondarily is he considered by the Bonpos to be the source, during a brief visit to Kongpo in Tibet in prehistoric times, of the shamanic practices of divine invocation (lha gsol-ba) and exorcism (sel-ba). [10] These shamanic practices are now classified among the lower Causal Vehicles (rgyu bon) of the Nine Ways of Bon. [11] Certainly, within Tibetan culture generally, the Lama as come to usurp and assume the traditional role of the shaman as healer and communicator with the Otherworld. The pujas or offering ceremonies (mchod-pa) performed by the Lama harmonize the relationship between our human world and the higher sacred order, as well as the Otherworld of the nature spirits. And at funeral ceremonies, the Lama acts a psychopomp or guide for the

soul of the dead, faced with the perilous otherworld journey through the Bardo or afterdeath experience. [12]

Furthermore, it is said in the Bon tradition that Tonpa Shenrab lived some 18,000 years before our time in the mysterious Central Asian kingdom of Olmo Lung-ring, otherwise known as Shambhala, located to the north of Tibet at the center of the world. [13] It is also said that his teachings were first set down in the language of Tazik and subsequently translated into the Zhang-zhung language, and lastly into Tibetan. But due to two previous persecutions of the Bonpos in Central Tibet, the first in the time of the seventh Tibetan king Drigum Tsanpo (Gri-gum btsan-po), and the second in the time of the great Buddhist king of Tibet Tisong Detsan (Khri-srong lde-btsan) in the eighth century, when the Central Tibetans conquered Zhang-zhung and finally ended its independent existence, many of the original texts of Yungdrung Bon were lost. Fortunately, however, a significant number of them were hidden away by certain Bonpo masters, such as the famous Dranpa Namkha (Dran-pa nam-mkha'), in various parts of Tibet and these were rediscovered centuries later as Terma or hidden treasure texts. [14]

The Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud, however, was never forced into concealment because of a special dispensation granted by the Tibetan king Tisong Detsan to the Zhang-zhung master Gyerpungpa. [15] The latter had received the oral instructions for Dzogchen from his own master Tapihritsa who had appeared to him as a Body of Light in the guise of a wise and miraculous child. The Dzogchen precepts had come down to Tapihritsa from the Buddha Tonpa Shenrab through a lineage of twenty-four masters (gang-zag nyer-bzhi), all of whom had realized the Rainbow Body ('ja'-lus-pa), that is to say, they dissolved their physical bodies into empty space at the conclusion of their earthly careers like the fading of a rainbow into the empty sky. [16] In the previous century, Tapihritsa had practiced these Dzogchen precepts which he had received from his own master Tsepung Dawa Gyaltsan (Tshe-spungs Zla-ba rgyal-mtshan), during a nine year solitary retreat in a cave near Mount Kailas. As a result of this, he attained the Body of Light of the Great Transfer ('pho-ba chen-po'i 'od-sku) while still alive, thus transcending the necessity to undergo the processes of death and rebirth. He later reappeared in the eighth century of our era in order to teach the precepts to his heart-disciple Gyerpung Nangzher Lodpo, who at the time was a priest in the service of the king of Zhang-zhung. The master gave permission to Gyerpungpa for these Dzogchen precepts to be set down in writing for the first time in the form of brief Upadeshas in the language of Zhang-zhung. Later these Upadeshas were translated into the Tibetan language and elaborated with commentarial material, which is the form in which we find them today. [17]

In my forthcoming book, Space, Awareness, and Energy: An Introduction to the Bonpo Dzogchen Teachings from Zhang-zhung, I deal with the historical aspects of this tradition and in some detail with its basic exposition of the philosophical views of Dzogchen. A number of translations of texts from this ancient cycle of Dzogchen teachings are included, especially those focusing on the three fundamental concepts in Dzogchen of Kunzhi, Rigpa, and Tsel (kun-gzi rig-pa rtsal), which I translate as "Space, Awareness, and Energy." A subsequent volume, containing translations of additional texts from this cycle, entitled The Six Lamps of the Heart of Enlightenment, will focus more on the meditation and ancillary practices associated with this tradition of Dzogchen preserved among the Bonpos.

The three selections presented here are extracted from the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud cycle of the Bonpo Dzogchen teachings:

1. two sections translated from "The Six Essential Points of the Bodhichitta" (Byang-chub sems kyi gnad drug), the full text being a practice manual for the Bonpo practice of Dzogchen,
2. the complete translation of "The Setting Side by Side of the Four Wheels" ('Khor-lo bzhi sbrag), which is particularly relevant for the teachings concerning the Bardo experience, and
3. the section entitled "The Little Nail of the Time of the Bardo" (Bar-do dus kyi gzer-bu), from "The Commentary to the Twenty-One Little Nails" (gZer-bu nyer-gcig gi 'grel-pa), which belongs to the most exceedingly secret section (yang gsang) of the Dzogchen teachings. This section also has a special relevance to the Bardo teachings.

The philosophical basis for both the Buddhist and Bonpo teachings concerning the Bardo, the intermediate state between death and rebirth, as explicated in the Tibetan Books of the Dead, is Dzogchen. I have made this clear in my previous book Self-Liberation through seeing with Naked Awareness. [18] Dzogchen is so called because it is the

quintessential teachings on the state of the Great Perfection (rdzogs-pa chen-po), a state that lies beyond the methods of Tantric transformation as represented by the generation process (bskyed-rim) and the perfection process (rdzogs-rim). It is perfect (rdzogs-pa) because it is all-encompassing and complete, with nothing left out, and it is great (chen-po) because it is total and there is nothing higher or more comprehensive than it. This Great Perfection refers to the primordial state of the individual (ye gzhi) at the core of each sentient being, which exists beyond all time and history, all location in space, all conditioning by Samsara and karma, indeed, beyond the operations of the mind or thought process. Thus, this primordial state, also called the Bodhichitta or the Natural State of the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid gnas-lugs), is primordially pure (ka-dag) because it has never been tainted by egoistic emotional defilements or become entangled in the machinations and illusions of Samsara. Nevertheless, at the same time, it is spontaneously self-perfected (lhun-grub) since it is the source of all possible forms and manifestations. It is both emptiness and spaciousness (stong-cha), on the one hand, and luminous clarity (gsal-cha) and awareness (rig-cha), on the other. These two sides of the Natural State (gnas-lugs) have been inseparable (dbyer-med) from the very beginning, and never otherwise.

The best known among the Tibetan Books of the Dead is that extracted from the Terma cycle of Karma Lingpa (14 cen.), known as the Kar-gling zhi-khro. The source for these texts is traditionally attributed to Guru Padmasambhava in the eighth century of our era. Although this master of both Tantra and Dzogchen came to Tibet from Nepal and India, he himself was of Central Asian origin, being from the country of Uddiyana, the mysterious land of the Dakinis, which was not only the source of Dzogchen, but place of origin for the Higher Tantras of the Buddhist tradition as well. [19] But there also exist Books of the Dead or Zhi-khro in the Bonpo tradition, including versions of the Bar-do thos-grol, where instructions are recited to the deceased consciousness by the Lama in order to guide the departed through the Bardo experience. Here, however, largely for reasons of constraint relating to time and space, I am able to include only a limited number of translations of Dzogchen texts concerning the Bardo, which are of largely theoretical nature, and must omit texts largely concerned with ritual, liturgy, or meditation. I plan to present translations of some of these texts in the future.

PART ONE
THE SIX ESSENTIAL POINTS OF THE BODHICHITTA:
BYANG-CHUB SEMS KYI GNAS DRUG

Here is contained the practice manual called "The Six Essential Points of the Bodhichitta", according to the Oral Transmission from Zhang-zhung for the Great Perfection Teachings (rdzogs-pa chen-po zhang-zhung snyan-brgyud las byang-chub sems kyi gnad drug ces bya-ba'i lag-len bzhugs-so).

PART ONE

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is clearly revealed as one's own Self-Awareness!

Within this short chapter on the essential points of the Upadeshas (of Dzogchen) contained in the sNyan-rgyud sems kyi me-long, "The Mirror of the Mind from the Oral Transmission", and the mThar-thug don gyi sgron-me, "The Lamp of the actual Meaning concerning what is Ultimately Attained", there are found six principal topics, namely,
1. the essential point of the recognizing of the Kunzhi abiding as the Essence, which concerns the Lamp of the Base that abides;
2. the essential point of one's own Self-Awareness arising in the interior and abiding anywhere within the Base, which concerns the Lamp of the Fleshly Heart;
3. the essential point of the directly penetrating gnosis originating anywhere along the pathway, which concerns the Lamp of the Smooth White Nerve;
4. the essential point of the Rigpa, or intrinsic Awareness, seeing nakedly whatever arises at any gate of the senses, which concerns the Lamp of the Water globe-like eye that lassoes everything at a distance;
5. the essential point which clearly and definitively decides upon the Trikaya when one practices in whatever manner along the path, which concerns the Lamp of the Direct Introduction to the Pure Realms; and
6. the essential point of the process of separating Samsara and Nirvana when encountering them anywhere along the Boundary between delusion and understanding, which concerns the Lamp of the Time of the Bardo.

These are the six essential points.

With respect to that (these six essential points which concern the Six Lamps), there are (two further considerations):
1. the three Upadeshas in brief, and
2. the four Lamps concerning the Modes of Arising.

I. The Three Upadeshas

With regard to that (the Natural State, which is the first consideration), there exist three types of Upadeshas as follows:
1. the Mother represents the Essence of Mind; it is uncreated, empty, and totally pure like the sky itself;
2. the Son represents the Gnosis of Awareness; it is without obscurations and inherently clear like the heart of the sun; and
3. the Mother and the Son are inseparable; they abide as the non-duality of luminous clarity and emptiness like the sun rising in the (early morning) sky.

IA. The Upadesha concerning the Base

The Base is the Natural State which is the Essence, and from the energy or potentiality of that (Natural State), there arises and develops the self-manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays, which are like illusions. Since the Natural State of that (Kunzhi) is understood as being just like what is seen or perceived, there arise (before the practitioner who thus understands) all the virtuous qualities of Nirvana (as pure visions). On the other hand, when one does not understand that it is like that, all the defects of Samsara or cyclical existence are awakened within oneself. These (pure or impure visions) arise in a manner that is unobstructed and unceasing. And since it (the Kunzhi) becomes the basis for both the originating of all the virtues and the defects (of Samsara and Nirvana, respectively), it is called the Base. This represents the Upadesha concerning the Base.

IB. The Upadesha concerning the Path

As for the Upadesha concerning the Path: The Base represents the non-duality of luminous clarity and emptiness. And with respect to itself, it has abided in its own inherent form from the very beginning. Since one is directly introduced by way of this profound Upadesha, one recognizes it, and one's view (or way of seeing) also becomes unmistaken. With respect to that, since one is mindful, one's clarity is without distraction and that is the

meditation. By means of this view and meditation, one practices and energetically purifies the sounds, the lights, and the rays which are the manifestations or visions of the Clear Light. By means of the gazes and the profound path of the method, because the sounds and the manifestations of the Clear Light are able to arise freshly, one becomes familiar with this, and by means of forceful and energetical purification, the signs of success on the path become unmistaken. And there comes about the arising of various visions or manifestations of the divine forms, of the celestial palaces, and of the pure realms, and the various modes of the arising of the Clear Light.

Furthermore, the sounds are recognized to be the inherent sounds of Awareness, which are said to be like echoes; the lights are recognized to be the inherent lights of Awareness, which are said to be like rainbows; and the rays are recognized to be the inherent rays of Awareness, which are said to be like reflected images (in a mirror). And since one knows that the divine forms represent the inherent forms of Awareness, much like the moon reflected on the water, one unmistakenly comes to decide definitively upon the source of delusions. And this reveals the emptiness of the source of the falseness of the visible appearances that arise. Thus, one cuts the root and foundation of both Samsara and Nirvana. The Kunzhi in itself is without obscurations and without veilings. This arising of Awareness or Rigpa in its nakedness represents the Upadesha of the Path.

IC. The Upadesha concerning the Fruit

As for the Upadesha concerning the Fruit: The Kunzhi and the Rigpa, representing the non-duality of luminous clarity and emptiness, abide as the inherent nature of the Dharmakaya, which is the great and total Primordial Purity. With regard to that, the sounds, the lights, and the rays are spontaneously self-perfected as the inherent nature of the five Gnoses and they represent the Sambhogakaya. Then, by way of a special understanding which is not at all discursive, there arise, as the objects of the six sense aggregates, the various appearances and sounds of both Samsara and Nirvana, and this represents the Nirmanakaya. In the same way, the Trikaya is realized in its own form in itself.

Since one practices on the path and does so habitually, one stirs up the depths of Samsara and delusions are purified into their own original condition. In the unlimited spaces of the Kunzhi, which is like the sky itself, the gnosis of Awareness arises in an all-pervading manner, just like the sun, and the magical apparitions of the Trikaya (which are the pure visions) having arisen in an inexhaustible manner, being like the rays of the sun, the benefit of living beings becomes thereby continually realized.

Furthermore, according to the respective strengths of their capacities, there exist three occasions for liberation: As for the individual of superior spiritual capacity, the external breathing having ceased, one attains liberation at the time when the internal breathing has not yet ceased. As for the individual of intermediate spiritual capacity, at the time when there arise the manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays in the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality, one becomes liberated. And as for the individual of inferior spiritual capacity, having transmigrated into a better situation in a future life, one becomes liberated there within a single lifetime.

Thus, the Upadeshas concerning the Base, the Path, and the Fruit are completed.

II. The Four Lamps

As for the Four Lamps concerning the Modes of Arising: As the energy of the Base, which represents (and embodies) the non-duality of luminous clarity and emptiness, these manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays arise in an unobstructed and unceasing manner. With respect to those experiences where one understands that, since they also arise, there exist four considerations with respect to that:

1. the sounds, the lights, and the rays that are spontaneously self-perfected with regard to the Base,
2. the sounds, the lights, and the rays that arise because of recent conditions (or secondary causes),
3. the sounds, the lights, and the rays that arise in experiences as signs along the path, and
4. the sounds, the lights, and the rays that arise at the time of the Bardo.

IIA. Spontaneous Perfection in the Base

As for their spontaneous perfection with respect to the Base: Due to the presence of the gnoses of one's own Awareness, the sounds, the lights, and the rays arise in a spontaneously self-perfected manner. Furthermore, they (the gnoses of Awareness) become clearly visible as light in the space of the sky which is luminously clear. Moreover,

due to the vast expanse of emptiness, they are heard as sound, and due to their state of non-duality, they emanate as rays (of colored lights). As for the location (of these manifestations), they occur inside the crystal having a hollow cavity, the reddish-brown pavilion of cornelian which is the physical heart. As for the pathway, they arise inside the lamp which is the smooth white nerve (or translucent hollow channel). And as for the gateway, they are projected through the gateways of the sense faculties (particularly the eyes). As for that, not having been created by anyone or anything with respect to the Base, these sounds, lights, and rays arise (spontaneously) as expressions of the energy (of the Base), therefore (these phenomena) are known as the natural Clear Light. This process should be understood as the mode of arising (of manifestations) with respect to the Base.

IIB. Arising due to Recent Conditions

As for their arising due to recent conditions: Having relied upon the Upadesha and upon the essential points of the method, the sounds, the lights, and the rays are created naturally in the presence of the Base and they arise as something that is clearly perceptible. Having relied upon that, one should be introduced directly to the fact that the lights represent inherent lights, the rays represent inherent rays, and the sounds represent inherent sounds.

IIC. Arising as Signs along the Path

As for their arising in experiences as signs along the path: At the time of separating the impurities from the purity of Rigpa, with respect to the awareness of this purity, the various manifestations that are sounds, lights, and rays arise as the signs of experience. Because one has the capacity and apprehends the activities of the winds or psychic energies of the elements, these signs come forth (for example) like smoke as the sign of the earth element, like fireflies or lightning as the signs of the fire element, like a mirage as the sign of the air element, like the rising of the moon as the sign of the water element, and like the sky devoid of clouds as the sign of the space element, and so on.

Moreover, one should be aware that they express the energies of the mind: (For example, there may arise visions of) rainbows, tree leaves and flowers, the various uncertain forms of sentient beings, the bindus and pavilions of light, the divine forms of the Sugatas, the very pure appearances of the Nirmanakaya, and those manifestations which are inconceivable, such as the appearances of the five Families of the Sambhogakaya, the mandalas and visions of various pure realms, the west (of the sky) which is not obscured by darkness, and the Clear Light which outshines all other lights, and so on. Until one arrives at ultimate realization, one should become acquainted with these signs and make them habitual in practice.

IID. The Arising at the Time of the Bardo

As for what comes forth at the time of the Bardo: At the time when awareness and the corpse have separated at the time of physical death, the manifestations of the elements fire, water, earth, and air, having become obstructed externally, and internally the manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays arise. Having obstructed delusory appearances, during the course of five days the manifestations of the five lights arise. (Now the text is speaking of the experience of the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality. Over a period of five days, in a symbolic sense, the five clear lights arise successively.)

Furthermore, they are called the five lights of the channels, namely, the white light of the gnosis of emptiness, the yellow light of the mirror-like gnosis, the green light of the gnosis of sameness, the red light of the gnosis of discrimination, and the blue light of the gnosis of activity. As for their meaning, the signs of gnosis become clearly visible as these five clear lights, and they are called the five Essential Lights.

Then, originating from these five lights, the five Buddha Families become clearly visible. From the white light arises Shenlha, from the yellow light arises Serje, from the green light arises Garse, from the red light arises Namse, and from the blue light arises Godse. They are called the five Lights which Diffuse Everywhere. Moreover, each of these five lights diffuse and spread everywhere, five into five. Indeed, they are called the five Radiant Lights. But with respect to their individual colors and forms, they arise in an uncertain manner. And they are called the five Lights which are Emanated. From these five colors originate various different images (of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas) that are created. Furthermore, the five lights arise without center or boundaries, arising like rainbows in the sky.

As for the rays, they arise as magical apparitions in an uncertain manner, like the opening up of a silk cloth or a woolen blanket (in the bright sunlight). Moreover, the five

lights which are emanated and radiate are manifestations of these rays. As for the sounds, they may be noisy, coarse, pleasant sounding, and roaring, and they are self-originated and uninterrupted in the same manner as thunder.

With respect to these sounds, lights, and rays, (mistakenly thinking that they are) extrinsic appearances (those that seem due to another or to some external cause), one grasps at them as being objectively real. And when fears and terrors originate (in response to these phenomena), one should cut them off in the Bardo (by means of Tantric transformation practice), and these self-manifestations should be known and clearly recognized to be merely illusions.

The Lamps of the Modes of Arising are hereby completed.

PART TWO

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is one's own Self-Awareness without obscurations!

In order to guide those disciples possessing good fortune along the path without error or mistake, the six essential points of this practice manual will be taught.

[Here sections I through V are omitted because they do not directly pertain to the Bardo teachings, but rather to vision practice.]

VI. The Procedures for Practice in the Bardo

As for the procedures for practice in the Bardo: At this time, with respect to one who has a superior capacity, by virtue of the direct introduction and one's great powers of purification, since one has been taught the instruction for the various self-arisings of gnosis having but a single taste, at the time when the external breathing has ceased, but where the internal breathing has not yet ceased, there and then one will attain Buddhahood. On that occasion, it is very important to meditate clearly.

With respect to an individual of intermediate capacity, having realized the power of purification (that is to say, by way of the practice of Tregchod and Thodgal prior to death during one's lifetime), since one has been taught the instruction for remaining without desires and attachments with regard to the self-manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays, which are actually like illusions, one becomes liberated in the Bardo of the Clear Light.

And with respect to an individual of inferior capacity, one who has a feeble or weak ability for purification, since one has been taught the instructions for the transference of consciousness, as well as having devotion to the meditation deity and the Guru, even though there may arise karmic visions in the Bardo of Existence, they will arise as pure visions or manifestations. And having been reborn into some pure realm, or into a place where the teachings of Dzogchen has spread, one will come to attain liberation within a single lifetime. This is the Upadesha for cutting off (the current of karma) in terms of a single Bardo experience.

Colophon

What is called the Six Essential Points of the practice manual is now completed. The description of the manner of the arising of experiences and understanding is also completed. One should teach this text only to one among those who adhere to the Lineage of the Masters, and not extend it to two or more. Since there exists this single transmission lineage only, if one should expand it beyond two persons, there will come retribution from the Dakinis. Having come down from the Trapa Chenpo of the earlier Lama Ya-ngal lineage, (that is to say, to Nyam-nyid Sherab Gyaltsan who belonged to the Ya-ngal clan), thereafter (this transmission of the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud) has spread gradually throughout Tibet.

SARVA MANGALAM

[Translated at Merigar, April 1988, by Vajranatha, John Myrdhin Reynolds]

Commentary to the Translation of the Text

Within the collections of the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud cycle of Dzogchen teachings, there is found a text entitled "The Six Essential Points of the Bodhichitta according to the Oral Transmission from Zhang-zhung for the Great Perfection Teachings" (rDzogs-pa chen-po zhang-zhung snyan-brgyud las byang-chub sems kyi gnad drug). The bulk of this text, having the abbreviated title of the gNad-drug, is a commentary rather than an Upadesha, or root text, and it is designated as a practice manual (...ces bya-ba'i lag-len bzhugs-so). The work actually contains of two separate texts, the first consisting of citations from two other even older texts mentioned below, and the second being an extended commentary on the preparatory introductions and practices for Thodgal. The first short text appears to be the older of the two and constitute the original "Six Essential Points concerning the Bodhichitta," which is, in fact, the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid). There is no colophon found at the conclusion of this first text and presumably it existed before the time of the editor of the collection as we have it now. The colophon to the second text indicates that it was written by Sherab Gyaltsan, the founder of Menri monastery in Tibet in the fifteenth century. Here are presented translations of two extracts from the text, which relate directly to the Bardo teachings. The remainder of the translation will be published in a future volume. [1]

The Homage

The Homage, with which the Tibetan text opens, Kun tu bzang-po rang-rig gsal-bar ston la phyag 'tshal-lo, invokes the Primordial Buddha Kuntu Zangpo (kun tu bzang-po, Skt. Samantabhadra) as being the Self-Awareness (rang-rig) which clearly reveals itself (gsal-ba'i ston) at the heart or core of every single individual sentient being. This Self-Awareness clearly reveals and shows itself in the guise of the ordinary everyday conscious life of the individual. Consciousness or awareness in itself testifies to the presence of Kuntu Zangpo, the Primordial Buddha. For that reason, the very name Kuntu Zangpo itself points to the meaning: that which is most excellent (bzang-po) is present everywhere (kun tu) in every sentient being. This presence is what makes a sentient being (sems-can) sentient. This indicates the presence in sentient beings of an intrinsic Awareness (rig-pa). One that is in itself beyond time and space, but which engages itself in the finitudes of time and space.

Here, Self-Awareness (rang-rig) must not be confused with the usage of the same Tibetan term (Skt. svasamvedana) in the system of the Chittamatra philosophy (sems-tsam-pa), where it designates a second cognition which is aware of the first or primary cognition that knows something deriving from sensory experience. Rather, in the Dzogchen context, it designates an individual intrinsic Awareness or Rigpa which is just awareness as such. This intrinsic Awareness is ontologically and epistemologically prior to any duality of subject and object that may beset consciousness. In fact, consciousness (rnam-shes, rnam-par shes-pa) is an awareness (shes-pa) that is inherently discursive (rnam-par) and dualistic in its operation by way of discriminating between subject and object. How does this situation of self-alienation arise? In terms of the process of apperception, a fundamental existential ignorance (lhan-skyes ma rig-pa) accompanies it from the very beginning and intervenes to taint and distort an originally pristine Awareness (rig-pa) which was present before the mind and its dualistic mode of knowing things came into operation. This ignorance arises spontaneously (lhan skyes) when apperception comes into action. Apperception is a secondary operation of the Manas or functional mind (yid). Moreover, this ignorance (ma rig-pa) is not an independent substance or reality; it is not something in itself, but represents a mere lack of awareness (rig-pa) and a deficiency of the fullness of being. It is the shadow-side of Reality. And in this sense, it represents the Fall. [2]

This original pristine cognition or awareness (ye-shes) contrasts with the secondary development of a discursive and dualistic consciousness (rnam-shes). In terms of the usual imagery employed in Dzogchen, this pure intrinsic Awareness (rig-pa) may be compared to the mirror and these moments of discursive dualistic consciousness (rnam-shes), which apprehended this or that, may be compared to the reflections in the mirror. But these reflections are not pure reflections because they are filtered through the lenses of the functional mind (yid) or mental consciousness (yid kyi rnam-par shes-pa) which is dualistic and distorted in all its operations. Thus, the Dzogchen texts make a clear distinction between mind (sems), or the mental process of conscious life, which is discursive and dualistic, and the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid), the Primordial State of the

individual, which is non-dual in its nature. This Nature of Mind is like the mirror itself and Rigpa or intrinsic awareness is like the capacity of the mirror to reflect whatever is set before it.

Kuntu Zangpo, the Primordial Buddha who has been awake and enlightened from the very beginning by virtue of fully understanding the Natural State of the Ultimate Reality (bon-nyid), is, therefore, like the mirror that reflects everything. Kuntu Zangpo is the Bodhichitta or the Nature of Mind as such. Consequently, He has never been touched or corrupted by the emotional defilements or kleshas (nyon-mongs-pa) that represent the actual causes of Samsara or cyclical existence. He has never been touched or moved by a sense of ego identity (bdag-'dzin) or caught up in entanglements with the illusions of Samsara, that mode of cyclical existence which embodies the mental process. Therefore, He represents a state of total primordial purity (ka-dag chen-po) and is the embodiment of the Dharmakaya itself (bon-sku), the ultimate aspect of Buddhahood and enlightenment.

With reference to the Dharmakaya, the same designation of Kuntu Zangpo is employed for the Primordial Buddha in the scriptures of both of the Old Schools, the Nyingmapa and the Bonpo. Although Kuntu Zangpo represents the Primordial Buddha who has been enlightened from the very beginning (ye sangs-rgyas), nevertheless, He is equally present in the heart and at the core of every single sentient being as the Base (gzhi) or the Primordial State of the individual (kun-bzang dgongs-pa). As the Dharmakaya, He is without boundaries, without limitations, without definitions, without any divisions, like the infinite sky itself. He is totally all-pervading and all-encompassing (khyab bdal chen-po). Because He is totally devoid of and in no way limited by any conceptions or discursive thoughts whatsoever, iconographically he is represented as a nude Buddha figure, lacking any ornaments or adornments, sitting in meditation position in the center of the infinitude of space. He is shown in meditation position or samadhi-mudra because He represents the state of pure contemplation that is beyond the workings of the mind and its conceptual limitations. His color is a deep azure blue because He represents the Dharmakaya and Shunyata, the state of emptiness, which is like the sky. He is surrounded by an aura of rainbow lights because He represents the inherent light of intrinsic Awareness. He is suspended in the middle of infinite space without any physical support and He sits upon an immaculate lotus blossom because He embodies a total primordial purity (ka-dag chen-po). Yet He manifests a clear, empty, translucent form like a rainbow in the sky because He expresses a total spontaneous self-perfection (lhun-grub chen-po). As the Dharmakaya, He is beyond all limitations of form and conception, the Dharmakaya being in actuality without any form or gender. This conventional form of the formless Dharmakaya is presented here only as an aid to human comprehension. The two sides of Buddhahood or enlightened awareness are expressed by the male and female Buddhas, Kuntu Zangpo and Kuntu Zangmo, in sexual union. This indicates the inseparability from the very beginning of luminous clarity and emptiness (gsal stong dbyer-med) in the Natural State of the Nature of Mind, which is the Primordial State of the individual.

Kuntu Zangpo is the essence of enlightenment or the Bodhichitta (byang-chub sems) who has been wholly present from the very beginning as purity and perfection, but who has gone unrecognized by ordinary deluded sentient beings, still caught up in Samsara, due to the arising of adventitious obscurations that conceal and cloud the presence of the primordial enlightenment which is Kuntu Zangpo. Just as thick clouds can cover the entire expanse of the sky from horizon to horizon, so that its azure vastness, as well as the face of the sun, are concealed from view, in the same way, the intrinsic freedom of Primordial Buddhahood is concealed from view by thick clouds of obscurations, which are karmic, emotional, and conceptual. The inherent spaciousness or emptiness of the vast open sky and the inherent luminosity of the sun are present all of the time, but are concealed from view by these thick clouds. Although the face of the sun is not visible to the eye, still it is present in the sky. If it were not wholly present in the sky, the whole world would lie in darkness and nothing at all would be perceived in the total darkness. It is the same with the individual's primordial Buddha-nature, which is the Nature of Mind. If it were not wholly present from the very beginning, there would be no knowledge, no consciousness, no life at all in the universe. Thus, Buddhahood is primordially present; it has been there all the time, although unrecognized, and so it is not something that can be attained or created or even nourished in order to grow. It has been wholly perfect from the very beginning. It is in no way increased or decreased by the absence or the presence of these obscurations, just as the dimension of the sky is in no way increased nor decreased by the

absence or the presence of the clouds in the sky. Or again, just as the nature of the mirror is in no way changed nor modified by the absence or presence of the reflections, so the Nature of Mind is in no way changed or modified by the absence or presence of these obscurations. Nonetheless, these thick layers of obscurations, which are both emotional and conceptual, accumulated from lifetimes without beginning, come to obscure the face of the individual's primordial Buddha-nature who is Kuntu Zangpo. In individual terms, Kuntu Zangpo is the Nature of Mind, the Bodhichitta, which lies beyond the mind. This Nature of Mind (sems-nyid) is not mind (sems) or the thought process (blo), just as the mirror is not the reflections and the sky is not the clouds, yet it is the source of both the finite mind and the toughts which unfold out of it.

Therefore, from the perspective of Dzogchen, the spiritual path, begins with the discovery within one's immediate experience of the Natural State of the Nature of Mind by way of a direct introduction (ngo-sprod-pa) from someone who has had the experience of it for oneself. This is a pointing out or a direct introduction to the Natural State. This Natural State (gnas-lugs) or Base (gzhi) represents the Trikaya of the Base (gzhi'i sku-gsum) and Primordial Buddhahood (ye sangs-rgyas). A direct introduction is like having the presence of the sun between the clouds pointed out by an adult to a child who has never been outdoors before. Thereafter, the entire course of the spiritual path (lam) is a process of purifying these various layers of obscurations, both gross and subtle, that have been accumulated from past lives beyond counting. These obscurations represent not only the individual's past karma, but also all one's impulses, emotional reactions, and egoistic tendencies, as well as the ideas and conceptions that constantly afflict the thought process. This includes the subtle thought constructions that construct and structure reality itself for the individual. The path or process of purification resembles the clouds dissipating in the sky, so that the azure vault of heaven comes into view as clear and unobstructed. This represents the Trikaya of the Path (lam gyi sku-gsum) and the Buddhahood that is in the process of becoming manifest (mngon sangs-rgyas). Once the clouds have finally dissipated and do not arise again, the face of the sun is clearly revealed and remains visible in the sky thereafter, whereupon the entire dimension of existence is brilliantly illuminated. This represents the Trikaya of the Fruit ('bras-bu'i sku-gsum) and the perfection of Buddhahood (rdzogs sangs-rgyas). Thus, one comes to the ultimate self-recognition that is the attainment of Buddhahood. All of this is implied in the Homage.

The Six Essential Points

Part One, which represents the first text, identifies itself as being a short chapter comprised of the essential points of six Upadeshas for the Dzogchen teaching (man-ngag gnad kyi byang-bu) extracted from two longer texts found elsewhere in the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud cycle, namely, the sNyan-rgyud sems kyi me-long, "The Mirror of the Mind from the Oral Transmission", and the mThar-thug don gyi sgron-me, "The Lamp of the actual Meaning concerning what is Ultimately Attained." These six principal topics (don drug) correspond to the Six Lamps (sgron-ma drug), or sources of light, which elucidate the process of Thodgal (thod-rgal) or vision practice. These six sources of light, which represent the six essential points (gnad drug) for the process of vision, are dealt with in much more detail in another text in this cycle, entitled sGron-ma drug, or "The Six Lamps," and this translation will be found in the subsequent volume. [3] Here, however, they are only briefly considered:

1. First, there is the essential point of the recognizing of the Kunzhi abiding as the Essence, which concerns the Lamp of the Base that abides (gnas-pa gzhi'i sgron-ma ngo-bo ltar gnas-pa kun-gzhi ngos-'dzin gyi gnad). This statement refers to the Base or the Primordial State of the individual, otherwise known as the Bodhichitta (byang-chub kyi sems) and the Natural State of the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid kyi gnas-lugs). This is the Essence (ngo-bo). It is uncreated by any causes and it does not cease, transcending all time and conditioning. For this reason, it is called the Base that abides (gnas-pa gzhi). In summery, it is Shunyata, which is the state of emptiness and pure potentiality, and as the Kunzhi, it is the source and basis of everything. This Bodhichitta is the open dimension and the interior light at the core of one's being.

2. Second, there is the essential point of one's own Self-Awareness arising in the interior and abiding anywhere in the Base, which concerns the Lamp of the Fleshly Heart (tsi-ta sha'i sgron-ma gzhi gang na gnas-pa rang-rig khong shar kyi gnad). Although Kunzhi and Rigpa pervade the entire human body, they chiefly reside in the hollow space inside the physical heart (tsi-ta). Here the Kunzhi abides like the clear open sky devoid of clouds.

And this individual Self-Awareness that arises in the interior (rang-rig khong shar) of the physical heart, which is made of flesh, is like the orb of the sun high in the sky. Thus, the physical heart serves as the base (gzhi) for the process of vision known as Thodgal.

3. Third, there is the essential point of the directly penetrating gnosis originating anywhere along the pathway, which concerns the Lamp of the Smooth White Nerve (dkar 'jam rtsa'i sgron-ma lam gang la 'byung-ba ye-shes zang-thal gyi gnad). The gnoses that directly penetrate everywhere (ye-shes zang-thal) are like the rays of the sun. There is one individual Rigpa or intrinsic Awareness for each sentient being, which is like the face of the sun, whereas there are many gnoses (ye-shes), which are like the rays of light of that single sun. These rays of light emanate from the hollow space within the heart and entering into the hollow translucent channel that originates at the heart, they pass through that channel when it arches over the brain membrane and terminates at the two eyeballs. This translucent channel, called the Kati and the smooth white nerve (dkar 'jam rtsa), being subtle in its nature, should not be confused with the optic nerve. The translucent channel is the pathway (lam) for the process of vision.

4. Fourth, there is the essential point of the Rigpa, or intrinsic Awareness, seeing nakedly whatever arises at any gate (of the senses), which concerns the Lamp of the Water (globe-like eye) that lassoes everything at a distance (rgyang zhags chu'i sgron-ma sgo gang la shar-ba rig-pa gcer mthong gi gnad). The eyes serve as the two lenses for these interior lights being projected out into the space in front of the individual. The eye is called the lamp of the water globe-like eye because it is like a spherical sack of water, that is to say, a lens. The lights of Awareness pass through these two lenses and diffuse out into space in order to illuminate everything, that is, lasso or snare everything at a distance (rgyang zhags). This image or impression is then pulled back into the eyes and down into the heart where it is recognized by the mental consciousness or Manovijnana (yid kyi rnam-shes). Thus, there exists a double process here of the projecting of light out into space and the perceiving of this light, in turn, as an external reality. And therefore, the eyes serve as the gateway (sgo) for the process of vision.

5. Fifth, there is the essential point which clearly and definitively decides upon the Trikaya when one practices, in whatever manner, along the path, which concerns the Lamp of the Direct Introduction to the Pure Realms (zhing-khams ngo-sprod kyi sgron-ma lam ci ltar nyams su blang-ba sku gsum dmar thag-bcad-pa'i gnad). During the course of the practice of vision known as Thodgal, the practitioner, because of one's direct personal experience, comes to decide clearly and definitively that these visions that arise represent the self-manifestations of the Nature of Mind. And within the bindus (thig-le) or the tiny spheres of rainbow light that appear in practice, and which link up into the chains of Awareness (rig-pa'i lu-gu-rgyud), one comes to see unfold the pure visions of countless Buddha realms. These are the pure realms. Thus, one is directly introduced to them and the practitioner comes to traverse the four stages in the development of vision (snang-ba bzhi). In this way, the practice of Thodgal and of dark retreat during one's lifetime come to serve as a preparation for the visions that arise in the Bardo experience after death.

6. Six, there is the essential point of the process of separating Samsara and Nirvana when encountering them anywhere along the Boundary between delusion and understanding, which concerns the Lamp of the Time of the Bardo (bar-do dus kyi sgron-ma 'khrul rtogs kyi so-mtshams gang la thug-pa 'khor 'das gyes tshul gyi gnad). Just as the Thodgal visions of the pure realms of Nirvana arise during the course of the practice of the dark retreat in one's present lifetime, so also in the dark empty spaces of the Bardo, these same visions arise. And because one has already done the practice during one's previous lifetime and has had experiences of these Thodgal visions, the practitioner recognizes them in the Bardo and is familiar with them when they arise in the Clear Light. In particular, this refers to the hosts of Peaceful and Wrathful deities (zhi khro lha tshogs), who arise as pure visions. At the Boundary (so-mtshams) arrived at following the state of total emptiness experienced after true psychic death and with the onset of the unfolding of the visions of the Clear Light while in the Bardo, the individual has the unique opportunity to come to understand and recognize these visions as self-manifestations of one's own Nature of Mind, thus attaining liberation into Nirvana. Or one may fail to understand and recognize them and so fall again under the sway of the delusions of Nirvana. Thus, there is a single Base, the Natural State of the Nature of Mind, but two Paths, that of Liberation leading to enlightenment and Nirvana and that of Delusion leading to rebirth in Samsara. And there are two Fruits or goals, that of a Buddha or enlightened being who enjoys intrinsic freedom

and that of an ordinary deluded sentient being who remains in bondage and slavery to cyclical existence which constitutes the essence of suffering.

As mentioned above, these six essential points (gnad drug), which represent six principal topics (don drug) for the teachings regarding the practice of Thodgal, were principally extracted from the text entitled sNyan-rgyud sems kyi me-long. The term snyan-rgyud, "aural transmission," indicates the genre or type of literature to which the text belongs and me-long is the example, that is, "the mirror." The principal topic of the text is sems or Mind, that is to say, not the thought process (sems, blo), but the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid) which is like a mirror. A mirror may contain an infinite number of different reflections, whether beautiful or ugly, good or bad, light or dark, and so on. But all these different reflections in no way change or modify or diminish the nature of the mirror. In the same way, the Nature of the Mind, like the mirror, may encompass and reflect many different thoughts, and emotions, and visions, and so on, but these, no matter how many they may be, will in no way come to change or modify or diminish the Nature of Mind. Mind or Bodhichitta is just what it is from the very beginning and has never become other than itself. It is beyond all time and history and conditioning. Nevertheless, the visions which it projects and reflects are principally of two types: the pure visions of the sacred order of Nirvana, which are the pure Buddha realms, and the impure karmic visions of the profane order of Samsara, which represent the various destinies of rebirth.

The Sacred and the Profane

In what sense are these two types of visions, the Nirvanic and the Samsaric, experienced both in practice and in the Bardo, sacred and profane? Indeed, this distinction between the sacred and the profane has been much discussed among scholars as representing something fundamental about the nature of religion. Everywhere outside of our modern urban industrial civilization in the West, both in ancient times and among tribal and peasant peoples even today, life is lived on these two distinct planes of existence: the sacred and the profane. The profane refers to the ordinary human affairs of everyday life, which are unimportant, chaotic, changeable and ultimately meaningless in a higher sense because they are impermanent and fleeting. This represents our human existential condition, which, in terms of the Buddhist view, is defined as Anitya, Duhkha, and Anatman, that is, impermanent, suffering, and insubstantial. This is the general, and not just the Buddhist, negative evaluation of the profane human condition as being something deficient in meaning and reality. Psychologically speaking, it is ego consciousness or ego identity, with its apprehending and judging, that gives birth to this sense of things. In a word, the profane is everything that is mundane, worldly, and Samsaric, what belongs to embodiment in the various destinies of rebirth.

In contrast to this, the sacred belongs to a different and a higher order of reality, one that is suffused with a superabundance of being and meaning. In a more popular sense, the sacred is felt to be everything that is supernatural, extraordinary, and memorable. Sometimes it is felt as an impersonal presence in extraordinary events or unusual features of the landscape. It is supernatural because it is not the familiar, the ordinary, the common, and the everyday. It impinges on our everyday consciousness and reality from the outside. When this power is impersonal, in anthropology it is termed "mana." But more usually, it is felt as the presence of and contact with the spirits of the Otherworld who inhabit the wild natural landscape beyond the confines of the village, the limited human world. Or again, it is felt in the very cosmological structure or archetypal pattern of that village itself, with its center and its periphery protected by walls or otherwise clearly demarcated. Most especially, it is felt in the contact one has with the great gods on high, dwelling in the heavens, who control the fate of mankind, or with those deities and spirits who dwell below in the earth where they control the powers of life and fertility. The ancient Greeks distinguished these two orders of divine beings as the theoi ouranioi and the theoi chthonioi respectively. In the old pagan religious culture of Tibet, also known as Bon, these two classes of divine powers, the celestial and the chthonic, where known as the Lha (Skt. devas) and the Lu (klu, Skt. nagas), respectively. Such revelations or eruptions of the sacred, whether personal or impersonal, into human experience are known as hierophanies. [4]

The German scholar of comparative religion, Rudolf Otto, spoke of the sacred in terms of an encounter with something truly extraordinary and overwhelming. [5] The individual becomes gripped by a reality that is wholly other, something ultimately mysterious, awesome, powerful, and beautiful, but totally incomprehensible in terms of

ordinary everyday experience. He called this encounter with the holy or the sacred the Mysterium tremendum et fascinans. In terms of the Tibetan Books of the Dead, this would refer to the encounter with the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities in the Bardo. [6] For this experience of directly encountering the sacred, which could be both fascinating and terrifying, Otto coined the term "numinous," from the Latin numen, a spirit or divine being. This refers to an encounter with something that is absolutely other, that is, other than the ego and its structured reality.

The great Swiss psychoanalyst, Carl Jung, described this encounter in more psychological terms. It is an eruption into consciousness, that is, limited ego consciousness, of the contents of the collective unconscious psyche which is common to the whole human race. These contents are something exceedingly archaic, older than the ego and its petty rationalities, and are completely beyond the control of the latter. Although these contents are unknowable in themselves to the ego consciousness, yet they appear to consciousness as inexplicable moods and impulses, and as symbolic images or archetypes in dreams, visions, and art. The gods of humanity are among these archetypes which emerge out of the collective unconscious spontaneously. In his commmentary to the Evans-Wentz translations, he included the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities among these archetypes. [7]

But both Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade do not engage in psychological reductionism; they do not seek to reduce this encounter, or religion itself for that matter, to mere psychological terms. For them the sacred has an autonomous reality and this cannot be reduced to anything else, whether psychological as in Freud, social as in Durkheim, or economic as in Marx. The numinous is unique and irreducible. It is an encounter with the other that is everything both beautiful and terrifying. The individual is humbled and over-awed, feeling that one is nothing in its presence. The sacred is experienced as something overpowering, great, sublime, and truly real. Here Otto is much influenced by his reading of the Old Testament, especially the account of Moses encountering an unknown god, or numen, on a mountain top lost in the desert wilderness.

For Mircea Eliade, the eminent Rumanian scholar of the history of religions, the numinous is not just an encounter with the personal God of Biblical monotheism, for there exist many gods, many spirits, many mysterious powers in the wilds of nature beyond the walls of the village. [8] In the encounter with the sacred, the individual feels in touch with something otherworldly, a dimension of existence that is powerful, extraordinary, overwhelmingly real and enduring, in contrast to ordinary life. The sacred is the embodiment of power and reality. It is suffused and saturated with being, whereas our normal in the world feels deficient and ephemeral. This sacred is overflowing with a superabundance of reality and meaning. The encounter with the sacred, the ultimate religious experience, gives reality and meaning to the tedious mundane life of the individual, where one slaves away throughout one's lifetime at the tasks of mere subsistence. The sacred provides an answer to the nagging question, "What is the meaning of my life?" Direct contact with the sacred heals the individual and makes one whole. It puts everything in perspective and the experience of the sacred generates an absolute certainty, at least while in the throes of the experience itself. Returning to the world of normal everyday life from his lonely mountain, the prophet proclaims his God, whom he encountered in the wilderness, to his people. This has been a recurrent pattern throughout human history. A prophet may retain this absolute certainly and confidence from a single encounter, but more likely there will be a series of encounters, as was the case with Moses, Zoroaster, and Muhammad. But not infrequently, after the first rush of enthusiasm and bliss has subsided after the encounter, the prophet will come to doubt his own experience. Nevertheless, the principal role of religion, whether prophetic or ritualistic, is to promote these encounters with the sacred, not just on a remote mountain tops in the desert wilderness, but in the village and its corporate life, as well as in the heart of each living man and woman. Religion serves the social function of conferring a higher purpose and meaning on the life of the individual and one's society. Contact with the sacred, brings the individual human being out of the mundane historical situation and transports one into the dimension of a different and higher spiritual reality, one that is luminous, transcendent, and archetypal. It puts all aspects of the life of the individual into a perspective where one participates in a higher order of reality and meaning.

Modern consciousness, however, lives in a world, our urban industrial civilization of the West, that has over the past three hundred years become radically desacralized. With the rise of modern science and post-Renaissance philosophy, since the days of Galileo,

Newton, and Descartes, we in the West have come to see the world, our universe, as one gigantic machine moved by its intricate clockwork of celestial mechanics. At first, the presence of God was still necessary to serve as the clock-maker, who created the world-mechanism in the time of the beginning, wound it up, and set its gears and wheels in motion. Then with the nebular hypothesis of the astronomers, the organic evolution of Darwin, and the genetics of Mendel, and so on, the necessary for the clock-maker was eliminated and God was put out of business. The human body also came to be looked upon as a mechanical device or automaton, and human consciousness itself came to be reduced to a mere epiphenomenon of the electro-chemical activities of the brain. The very core of our being as humans became merely "the ghost in the machine." With behaviorism in the twentieth century, even the necessity for consciousness was eliminated altogether and its multiple functions were said to be adequately explained in terms of stimulus and response. And later, with cognitive psychology, the activities of the black box of the mind became formalized and reduced to the operations of the bio-computer in the brain. The mechanistic model of the human being became complete and reigned supreme in our scientific culture; the human being is no more than a complex machine. And at the end of the individual's life, when the electric current we call biological life is switched off, the complex computer which is the human being shuts down and then there remains nothing. And in the same way, the entire universe, which, according to some modern scientific estimates, came into existence some fifteen billion years ago, joyously and excitedly with the Big Bang, will in a few more billion years, perhaps fifteen, dissipate all its energy in accordance with the second law of thermodynamics. The universe as a whole will arrive at a motionless state of ultimate entropy, that is, death.

The machine has become the root metaphor for our modern civilization, engendering a totally mechanistic view of the human being and our world. However, this reductionist mechanistic world-view has, after the mid-point of the present century, come under increasing critical examination in the West in both academic and scientific circles, and even in the popular media. This totally mechanistic view of the human being and of nature and the universe as a whole, could potentially lead to nihilism and to the death of the soul, or even worse, to the death of the spirit. [9] But it is no longer felt by many contemporary or post-modern thinkers that the machine model provides an adequate and exhaustive description of objective reality. This mechanistic view of nature, as being the world-machine, which has been generated by modern science during the last three hundred years, has its parallels with the Gnostic view of the world ruled and dominated by the powers of an inevitable fate, a world view generated by the contemporary Babylonian science of astrology. In both cases, the result was to create in the urban individual a profound sense of alienation and nihilism. [10]

But aside from this modernist interlude now passing away, a sense of the sacred can be shown to be absolutely crucial to human existence and it comes to shape every aspect of human life. In general, it can be said that religion is concerned with how both the individual and how society as a whole is related to the sacred, however the sacred may be defined within a particular cultural horizon. Again, in whatever ways their mythologies and their theologies may differ, all of the religions found among humanity are fundamentally concerned with this experience of the sacred, whether through collective rituals or individual religious and mystical experience. Although the sacred is encountered in one's immediate experience, its meaning is elicited and put into perspective by way of constructing a narrative, a sequence in time of events and images. Such a narrative, whether oral or written, is known as a myth. Myth is not history. A myth is not a true and accurate account of what actually happened yesterday or the day before, or even hundreds or thousands of years ago. Nor is a myth just an entertaining story about what could have happened long ago. Rather, a myth is a narrative about the actions of gods, heroes, and ancestors that says something fundamental about our world, our society, and our human existence. Myth provides meaning to life, a framework in which to think and evaluate things. Myth provides models or archetypes and these sacred patterns come to govern many kinds of human activities and, even more, infuse them with reality. In general, as distinguished from folk tales and legends, myths recount the archetypal actions of gods, heroes, and ancestors at the time of the beginning of things when creation was still new and fresh, the time when the things and the activities of this world were first brought into being. Myths explain why things are they way they are now. But even more, they provide models and examples that show how life ought to be lived. Myths are not dead and

ossified structures, like so many specimens preserved in museum cases, but are living processes that evolve with the history of a society. They represent a continuous and on-going dialogue between human beings and a higher dimension of meaning. Thus, religions and mythologies have a history because human beings have a history. [11]

In general, the principal function of the sacred as religion and myth is to give meaning to human life, thereby linking human activities to a higher, more comprehensive spiritual order, which would otherwise be chaotic, meaningless, and without higher purpose. This higher order confers meaning, purpose, perhaps even justice, on the disorderliness of mundane existence. It links human activities with something felt to be more permanent and meaningful, perhaps even eternal in a sense, that is, to the creative actions of the gods and the first ancestors at the time of the beginning of the world. To the Australian Aborigines this is known as the Dreamtime. To imitate and repeat the actions of the gods and the ancestors is to do things properly and significantly. This higher archetypal order extends throughout the creation or ordered existence, spatially and temporally, and represents what is known as the cosmos (Skt. loka). Nothing is more terrifying than chaos, emptiness, total meaninglessness, not even evil itself, which can have an implicit order and rationale. It is not evil itself that is terrifying, not even the Devil, but an evil that is totally inexplicable and meaningless. The ego, like a small island of light in the midst of a great storm-tossed dark ocean, fears being engulfed and overwhelmed by what is outside and not under its control. The ordered cosmos is a defense against these dark waters of chaos; it maintains the ramparts against the night and against death. The ego generates a cosmos of meaning about itself, an ordered existence, in the same way as do any group of human beings or any society with its culture.

In the Vedas, the oldest surviving religious literature in India, this higher spiritual order, which is both the natural order of the world and the moral order among humans, is called Rta. Its opposite is anrta or disorder, chaos, injustice. The gods or Devas are the custodians and guardians of this cosmic order. They, as representing the forces of light, oppose the dark demonic forces of chaos who lurk in the darkness outside the ordered cosmos. Human beings participate in this divinely ordered cosmos, not only in terms of individual morality and the adhering to social norms and conventions, but by way of ritual actions according to the sequence of the seasons. And especially they do so by performing the ritual action of yajna or sacrifice, that is, by making offerings to the gods, engaging in an exchange of energies between the human world and the higher spiritual order represented by the gods who possess the capacity to protect humanity against the relentless onslaught of the forces of chaos. In response to these sacrifices and offerings, the gods bestow their blessings of abundance, fertility, good fortune, and health. In this way, the yajna ceremonies performed by the Brahman priests functioned to keep nature and society in order and running smoothly. Yajna ritual became the very basis of Vedic religion, also known as Brahmanism, and which is now a major component of the Hindu tradition of India.

But the Buddha Shakyamuni came to offer a radical critique, from a higher spiritual vantage point, of the Vedic ritualism of the Brahman priests. He was especially opposed to the practice of yajna as blood sacrifice. The slaughtering of animals, even if done ritually for religious purposes, would merely generate more negative karma, in his view, and certainly not serve to sustain the moral order. Only good deeds, especially deeds of generosity and kindness, could do that. In Buddhist practice, puja offerings. such as fruits, flowers, and grains, came to be substituted as the medium of exchange between the human world and the Otherworld of the gods and spirits. Due to Buddhist influence, which was very widely spread in India during the early medieval period, the practice of blood sacrifice came to be largely abandoned within Hinduism and replaced with the practice of puja.

In later Hindu literature, as well as in the literatures of the Buddhists and the Jains, the word Dharma came to replace the Vedic term Rta as the designation for the cosmic order and especially for the moral order among humans. According to the Brahmana priests, and especially in the Hindu law books known as the Dharma Shastras, dharma came to mean one's social duty, particularly the obligation to follow the rules of one's caste in human society and to observe the rules for ritual purity. But the Buddha understood the term Dharma in a more fundamental sense. Indeed, he understood it as being the very basis or foundation of existence, and not merely as social convention. Rather, he expounded the Dharma in the form of the Four Holy Truths and the Noble

Eightfold Path at the outset of his public teaching career. This was known as the Dharmachakra-pravartana Sutra, the discourse for setting in motion the Wheel of the Dharma. Like a wise and skilled physician, he clearly diagnosed the fundamental dis-ease or predicament of the human condition, offered a prognosis that indicated the possibility of a cure, and provided a method of regime for the realization of that cure. Thus, the totality of his teaching regarding human existence and its potentialities came to be called the Buddha Dharma, that is, the Dharma of the Buddha. Thus, the term Dharma came to mean, not only the basis of human existence, but the teachings regarding this basis as well.

The Buddha did not deny the existence of the gods or Devas in heaven, nor did he deny their function as guardians of the moral and the cosmic order and their opposition to the Asuras or demons. He accepted the entire pagan mythology and pantheon of the Vedas, and certainly the existence of such principal Vedic deities as Brahma and Indra who both frequently appear in the Buddhist scriptures as supplicants of the Lord Buddha. However, although the Devas support the moral order of the Dharma, they are no longer its spiritual source or origin. Like human beings, the Devas may follow and practice the Dharma, but they only represent it on a lower worldly level, such as a priest or a king might do among humankind. The Buddha, however, pointed to a transcendent source of the Dharma, one beyond this world, because the totality of this world, including the heavenly realms of the Devas and the Brahmas, still belong to the profane order of Samsara or cyclical existence. The Buddha, like a messenger who has come from afar, pointed to a higher spiritual reality which totally transcends cyclical existence and does not participate in the corruption and degeneration of time and history. This totally transcendent spiritual order, called Nirvana in Buddhism, even though it is beyond time and history, yet impinges upon human existence, providing the archetypes which give meaning to what is otherwise fleeting, insubstantial, and purposeless in an ultimate sense. In the context of Indian society, the Dharma gives a spiritual content and structure and purpose to life; it provides meaning on the ultimate level to our evanescent life here on earth. It puts things in the perspective of eternity. The Dharma, then, presents a newer and higher dimension to spirituality and to the sacred than that presented in the old pagan religion of India. The Buddha shifted upward the ontological level of the sacred, placing it above the level of the gods, making it superior to their celestial regime. Indeed, he located the true dimension of the sacred in Nirvana, the unconditioned existence (Skt. asamkrita-dharma) that transcends and is beyond Samsara.

In the portico at the entrance to many Tibetan Buddhist temples, there is a painting of a large wheel, the Bhavachakra or Wheel of Becoming, that has six spokes. The spaces between these spokes are filled with images that depict the six destinies of rebirth in Samsara, including the celestial realms of the gods and the infernal realms of the hells. In the center of the hub of this wheel there are shown three animals: a red bird, a green snake, and a black pig, which graphically symbolize the three poisons of greed, hatred, and confusion. These three root emotional defilements or kleshas represent the driving mechanism or main-spring for the cosmic machinery of cyclical existence. Around the rim of the wheel are depicted the symbols of the twelve links in the chain of interdependent origination, or the evolution of individual consciousness (rten-'brel, Skt. pratitya-samutpada). The Buddha stands in the space outside this wheel, whose circumference demarcates and defines the totality of Samsara, and points upward to a transcendent spiritual reality. Conventionally, the symbolism is in terms of above and below, whereas the actual direction of spiritual ascent is inward. The parallels with the Gnosticism of the West in the first few centuries of the Christian era here are very suggestive. [12]

There also exists a parallel here between the treatment accorded by Buddhism of the older Vedic religion with its excessive ritualism and its polytheistic pantheon and the engagement of early Christianity with Greco-Roman paganism and later with the pagan religions and pantheons of the Celtic, Germanic, and Slavic tribes of Old Europe. But whereas the Buddhist strategy tended to co-opt and assimilate the old pagan deities of India and Tibet, transforming them into guardians of the Dharma, the higher spiritual order, the Christian church tended to demonize the old gods, although not entirely. Even though Jupiter and Mars are specifically called demons by the early Church Fathers such as Augustine, and the Celtic horned god Cernunnos and the northern shaman Odin were also assimilated to the Christian Devil, other pagan figures were absorbed into the bosom of the Church as Christian Saints. For example, the Egyptian Isis and Horus became the Virgin and Child and Lugus, the great God of the Druids, became assimilated to St. Michael,

the dragon slayer. Even Odin himself, the wise old shaman in yet another of his many guises, became the prototype of Father Christmas or Santa Claus. [13]

In terms of the Buddhist cosmology, the old pagan gods of the Vedic pantheon do exist in their own dimension, with Indra enthroned as king of the Devas in his celestial palace on top of the cosmic mountain Sumeru at the center of the world, like Zeus enthroned on top of Mount Olympos. Even the old Creator God Brahma still dwells enthroned at the summit of heaven, like El in Canaanite mythology or Elohim in the mythology of the Hebrew Bible. But neither of these pagan gods, nor the angels, nor even the Creator God of monotheism represent the ultimate spiritual reality. In the Buddhist view, the Creator God himself is only the God of this world Samsara, which is conditioned existence (Skt. samskrita-dharma) and therefore impermanent and not abiding. This is clearly indicated in the Buddhist Myth of Genesis, where Brahma is a generic term and not a single Supreme Being. [14] All of the gods, even the Creator God himself, belong to the order of conditioned existence which is Samsara. Indeed, they are ignorant sentient beings, like ourselves, and in no way enlightened, no matter how wise and powerful and long lived they might be. [15] Whatever is conditioned is characterized as impermanent, suffering, and insubstantial and, therefore, ultimately even the gods and their divine order will eventually pass away, only to be reborn anew in the cycle of the next universe. All of Samsaric existence, then, is profane from the higher vantage point of the Buddha Dharma, whereas the ground of being, which cannot be grasped and defined by the categories of the finite intellect is beyond profane time and space. Buddhist enlightenment looks to an unconditioned reality beyond Samsara, just as the Gnostics looked to an Unknown God, or Theos Agnostos, beyond the Demiurge, the tyrannical Creator God of this world. In psychological terms, this Demiurge embodies the principle of ego identity, whereas this Theos Agnostos, which, as the very ground of being, cannot be grasped by the intellect, is Kuntu Zangpo. [16]

The Dzogchen texts speak of two types of vision. The first type of vision is pure and archetypal, and therefore sacred, whereas the second type represents impure karmic vision, a type of vision and perception that is distorted and delusory ('khrul-pa). This vision is profane and represents a distortion or misperception of the former because of the presence of ignorance, which represents a deficiency of awareness (ma rig-pa). The former, however, is perceived in the light of the full presence of awareness (rig-pa) and understanding (rtogs-pa). The distorted and deficient visions of the various destinies of rebirth in Samsara, conventionally said to be six, are cognized by way of discursive thoughts (rnam-par rtog-pa, rnam-rtog) and by a mind afflicted by and burdened with selfish and egoistic negative emotions (nyon-mongs-pa). This inefficient mechanism, where the negative emotions or kleshas are mixed up with perception itself, is known as the Klishtamanas (nyon-yid) or defiled mental consciousness, whereas the pure visions of Nirvana are directly cognized by an undistorted primal and pristine awareness (ye nas shes-pa, ye-shes). Ordinary deluded sentient beings know and cognize the impure karmic visions of Samsara, or profane worldly existence, by means of discursive thoughts (rnam-rtog), whereas enlightened beings, such as Buddhas and Great Bodhisattvas, know immediately, directly, and intuitively the pure visions of Nirvana by means of pristine awareness or gnosis (ye-shes).

Conventionally, this mode of cognition is said to be five in number. However, although they are spoken of as the five gnoses, such as the gnoses of emptiness, the mirror-like gnosis, and so on, in actuality there is only a single gnosis or primordial awareness with these five aspects or functions. Thus, it can be said that a Buddha or enlightened being does not possess a mind, that is to say, a dualistic consciousness and a mental process consisting of discursive thoughts and emotional defilements, whereas that is precisely what characterizes the ordinary sentient being (sems-can), literally "one who possesses (-can) a mind (sems)." The knowledge or awareness possessed by a Buddha refers not to the mind (sems) or thought process (blo), but to the operation of the fivefold primordial awareness (ye-shes lnga). This is direct, immediate, and intuitive and is not mediated by an intervening conceptual process (rnam-rtog gi blo). For this reason, the knowledge (mkhyen-pa) of a Buddha is said to be omniscient (kun mkhyen), not in the sense of knowing an infinite number of facts or concepts, like some giant computer, but in the sense that a mirror can reflect whatever arises before it. Being itself outside of time, the mode of enlightenment of a Buddha knows all events in the three times of past, present, and future simultaneously, and yet can distinguish each one individually in its context in

terms of relative time and place. Thus, a Buddha is able to act with compassion in terms of the needs of specific individual sentient beings, but spontaneously and effortlessly without conception or deliberate intention. [17]

Here, in the Dzogchen texts, there are presented two modes of cognition, the unenlightened and the enlightened, known as the Samsaric and the Nirvanic respectively, as well as two objects of cognition, the impure, created by past karma, and the pure, which represents the dimension of enlightened awareness, and two kinds of perceivers, ignorant deluded sentient beings and enlightened beings or Buddhas. These represent two paths and two results, but they arise from a single source or base, which is not the mind, but the Nature of Mind. Yet because these two modes of being both arise and derive from the same source, there exists the possibility, even for the most ignorant of sentient beings, of enlightenment and liberation from the snares and delusions of Samsara.

However, mind or mental consciousness, as well as discursive thoughts are inherently dualistic, postulating the real and separate existence of two profane orders of being, namely, the subject and the object. How does this comes about? The elucidation of the evolution of delusion ('khrul-pa'i rten-'brel), is a principal concern of the Dzogchen teachings. Mythologically speaking, this process begins with the Fall from Paradise, a pre-existing heavenly or celestial condition of pure light. This Myth of Genesis is found in various places in the Vinaya and elsewhere in Buddhist literature. [18] But in psychogenic terms, that is to say, in terms of the evolution of the individual psyche in each lifetime, this Fall is once again repeated. In terms of myth, it is an event that occurred at the beginning of time, following the first creation of the human race, but in terms of individual experience, it is repeated each time one dies and is reborn again into Samsara.

But what is the cause of this Fall and the consequent forgetting of our original celestial nature? It is not a question of willfulness, pride, and disobedience, as the Myth of Genesis in the Bible is commonly interpreted, but rather a primordial ignorance. It is this ignorance, which is not some lack of knowledge of this fact or that fact, but a fundamental and radical lack or diminution of primordial awareness at an existential level. In Platonic terms, it is a forgetting of our original presence. This diminution or diminishing of the Clear Light of Awareness provides room for the visions of Samsara to arise as the dull lights seen on the Bardo. These dull lights represent a contraction or diminishing of being. And this diminishing is not just in terms of quantity or intensity of light, but also in terms of quality. Thus, the various dull lights of different and distinct colors are said to give rise to the various dimensions or realms of rebirth.

Once this fundamental dichotomy of being has been created at the primary level by ignorance (ma rig-pa), then a process of evolution unfolds. [19] This initial alienated subjectivity then evolves into a secondary level which postulates the real existence of a subject which grasps or apprehends what is thought to exist outside of itself. At a third level this develops into a real sense of self-identity (bdag 'dzin), a conceptual structure or conception of oneself as a specific entity to which various properties are attached. This conception of a self, now felt to be substantial and abiding in the normal person, develops over time in dynamic interaction with its environment, especially its social and interpersonal environment. This illusory and ultimately false entity is then given the name of a concrete individual.

At the next level this pseudo-entity called the ego (bdag, Skt. atman) appropriates everything in its immediate environment by way of the perceptions, feelings, and impulses that arise into consciousness, identifying itself with each of them and thinking "This is mine! That is mine! This perception is mine, this feeling is mine, this impulse is mine!" and so on. Now overburdened with the weight of so many possessions, the ego comes to crave yet more possessions, fearing it will loose what it already has. This desire for more and more will never be satisfied. Nonetheless, the ego takes pride in its possessions, thinking, "I am this or that!" And in this way, the ego becomes envious of the possessions of others in the range of its perceptions. It comes to covet what it perceives as belonging to the other. At the same time, it becomes anxious and fearful. So, the ego continually desires to be enhanced and appropriate the world perceived about it. It becomes angry when it meets resistance or denial by the other or when its desires are not fulfilled immediately. It becomes angry and hates those others that represent obstacles to the immediate gratification of its desires. This ego is like an infant newly born into the world, ever needful, ever demanding.

Thus, there arise into consciousness the five kleshas or negative emotions of confusion, greed, pride, envy, and anger, and these in turn become the causes that generate and create cyclical existence, that mode of existence known as Samsara. And Samsara ('khor-ba), that which cycles or revolves (bskor-ba), represents not only the beginningless cycle of death and rebirth for all sentient beings in the cosmological sense, but also in terms of psychology, the mode of mental activity and thought processes that arise from moment to moment for that individual. Indeed, from moment to moment, with each flash of electricity across the neuron or nerve synapse, the individual dies and is reborn. Thus, Samsara or cyclical existence is, at the most basic level, the individual's normal mode of mental activity and being in the world. This process is otherwise known as interdependent origination (rten-'brel). Graphically and in symbolic terms, it is represented as the Bhavachakra or Wheel of Becoming (srid-pa'i 'khor-lo) mentioned previously.

The mind is pre-eminently a process of becoming. Lacking any inherent existence (rang-bzhin med-pa), it is neither an entity nor a substance. In terms of its evolution, its point of origin is ignorance or the lack of awareness, and the main-spring of its mechanism are the kleshas or the negative emotional defilements, with which the ego or sense of self-identity is inseparably linked. When these kleshas or passions arise into consciousness, the ego identifies with them totally, is overwhelmed by them, and is swept away by them. It appropriates them, thinking, "This desire is mine; I am this desire; I want!" Or, "This anger is mine; I am angry; I hate!" and so on. Thus, from moment to moment, there exist a plurality of egos or selves representing this process of identifying with each thought, emotion, feeling, impulse, and perception that arises into the stream of consciousness. This on-going and unending process of identifying is the actual significance of the skandhas or the aggregates of consciousness which form the basis for Buddhist psychology. The skandhas are not entities or things, but evolving structures or processes that change in the stream of consciousness from moment to moment. [20]

However, if these processes of the skandhas are put under close observation by way of introspection, it is indeed discovered that there exist here no entity or abiding substance inhering in them. If one searches for the mind within the body and without, one will not find it. It is this very unfindability (mi rnyed) that is the secret. [21] This sense of the self, called the ego, which is the basis for the apprehending and appropriating of the kleshas, is a mere phantasm lacking any inherent existence. It is unreal and an illusion, and yet, even though it is unreal and illusory, things continue and events continue to occur in the stream of consciousness. The self is empty and without any inherent existence, and yet events occur and the world process goes on and on. This discovery, arrived at by way of self-observation, which represents higher insight (Skt. vipashyana), opens the door to the possibility of putting an end (Skt. nirodha) to the on-going psychological process of cyclical existence. Its relentless cycling, this cosmic rat-race, can indeed be broken. [22] It is possible to liberate oneself from the machinery of Samsara-- the mechanical mind or computer, and realize one's enlightenment and intrinsic freedom which is called Buddhahood (sang-rgyas-pa). This represents both a complete purifying (sangs-pa) of all distortions and obscurations and an opening up and blossoming (rgyas-pa) of all potentialities for enlightenment.

As ignorance is the origin of the evolution or the unfolding of delusion, which represents cyclical existence, so gnosis or awareness (rig-pa) is the origin of liberation which is the realization of Buddhahood. Unencumbered by the distortions of mind engendered by the process of ego identification and entanglement with the kleshas, the enlightened being directly intuits by way of pristine awareness (ye-shes) the nature of Reality (bon-nyid). This Reality or Essence (ngo-bo) is empty and lacking in any inherent existence. For enlightened awareness, the distortions induced in space by the selfish negative emotions or kleshas and the distortions, cloudings, and deficiencies induced by discursive thoughts do not intervene between reality and the seeing of reality in its nakedness.

However, our mode of speaking here is still dualistic. Yet this dualism is not actual in the case of enlightened awareness, but rather it is here spoken of for purposes of discourse because human understanding is inherently dualistic. It is a fundamental existential ignorance (lhan-skyes ma rig-pa), inherent in the ordinary mode of human karmic vision, that gives rise to the dualism or dichotomy of subject and object, bifabricating a state of being that is in itself whole, comprehensive, and non-dual. At the time of the very

beginning, before the creation of the world, and before the mechanisms and programs of the computer-like mind were set in operation, there was simply awareness. This awareness (shes-pa), which is original, pure, primary, and primordial (ye nas), was present before the processes of perception, memory, conception, and so on, came into operation. This pristine awareness (ye-shes) is primordially present without any distortion or obscuration, and without any bifabrication into subject and object. It is present prior to this division; it is prior to the process of perception itself. This pristine awareness is a pure non-dual intuition (ye-shes gnyis-med) of reality which is prior to the distinction between knowledge and what is known.

However, with the diminution in the quality and intensity and purity of this original awareness, there arises the presence of a shadow or deficiency, a lack of awareness known as ignorance (ma rig-pa). This ignorance is present from the very beginning and is the cause of the fallen or dualistic mode of consciousness. It is inherent in the mode of being known as Samsara, which is temporal and limited in location and orientation in space. It is a deficiency or limiting of possibilities and dimensions. It is like a hungry and penniless beggar, attired only in dirty rags, making his way through a rich and crowded bazaar, abundantly stocked with goods he has no means to purchase. This spontaneously born ignorance is existential, inherent in the very quality of Samsaric existence itself. It is spontaneously born or born together (lhan-skyes) with the original Awareness, like the shadow is born to accompany the light. They are like twins, one light, the other dark. [23] In terms of our relative existence, wherever there is light, there is also darkness. The god and the demon that accompany each individual throughout one's life are born together (lhan-skyes kyi lha dang lhan-skyes kyi bdud). [24] The presence of the shadow gives rise to a false sense of duality, even of opposition, a separation of subject and object, even though they arise from the same source which is the Base or the Natural State.

It is this false duality that sets into motion the evolution or wheel of Samsara, which is the cyclical existence of mind. Because of interdependent origination, the Manas or functional mind comes into operation and the process of apperception begins. But true pristine awareness (ye-shes) is prior to these operations of the mind. These mental operations are all secondary and derivative, creating a false sense of self or subject, a sense of separation and opposition of I and the other; whereas, at the primary level, a pristine awareness is simply awareness (shes-pa) as such and nothing more. It is naked and not attired in any garments consisting thoughts and memories (rtog dran ma gos-pa). This primal knowledge is not distinct from being; there is no separateness here, except in terms of human discourse. For the enlightened being, one is what one knows. One knows the pure archetypal visions of Nirvana and so one is these visions of enlightenment. One is one's own visions. Enlightenment originates from within oneself, not from the ego or some conceptual agenda, but solely at the level of the Base itself. It originates from the Natural State because it is possible and because it has been present there all of the time and never otherwise.

During the intermediate phase between the Base and the Fruit, which represents the practice of the Path, these pure Nirvanic visions of enlightenment are seen and understood to be projections of one's own Nature of Mind residing in hollow space of one's physical heart at the core of one's being. Then, at the time of physical death, one looses the material support for awareness represented by the body and the brain. The body and the mind separate. Then at the time of psychic death several days later, Awareness looses even the subtle support of the mind and the psychic energy, which now dissolve and cease to operate. Then Awareness or Rigpa is totally naked, lacking any constraint, and suspended in the middle of empty space with no body whatsoever, whether physical, subtle, or mental. It has been denuded completely. it is now beyond time, no longer part of any temporal order, which is another way of saying that it has returned to the time of the beginning, the timeless time before creation which is eternally now. And it is without location orientation in space; it is simultaneously nowhere and everywhere. It has been dissolved or enfolded back into its original condition, Shunyata, which is both emptiness and the pure potentiality for any manifestation.

Now that these illusory barriers separating the inside and the outside have dissolved, as when one smashes a clay vessel, the interior space inside the vessel of the body totally integrates with the external space beyond, so that there is no difference between them. Even before this smashing of the vessel of individual existence, what appeared outside in the external dimension of space (phyi dbyings) actually originated from inside, within the

interior dimension of space (nang dbyings) of the mind. This was especially experienced and realized in the practice of Thodgal. Now that the illusory clay vessels of the body and the mind that contain and imprison the lamp of Awareness have been smashed, the internal space inside the walls of the vessel and the external space outside the walls integrate and become one. This represents the realization of the secret dimension of space (gsang dbyings). Now that both the dimension of space, which is the state of emptiness itself, and intrinsic Awareness, which is the condition of clear luminosity, abide in their total nakedness, there is no barrier, no wall, to block the manifestation of enlightenment which has been there from the very beginning. During one's life time, one's inherent Buddha-nature is the inner light of Awareness concealed within the shells of the body and the mind, like a golden Buddha image hidden inside the temple with the doors shut and bolted. Now that the doors to the temple have been opened, the golden Buddha image within may clearly be seen. The light of one's inherent Buddha-nature, present here from the very beginning, can manifest everywhere in the infinity of space. This light is unceasing, inexhaustible, and without limitations or partialities, like the rays of the sun. When the clouds in the sky finally dissipate, the rays of light of the sun illuminate the entire landscape in every direction.

This whole process of enlightenment, called liberation (grol tshul), is elucidated in great detail in the texts of the Dzogchen tradition. And it is described there in distinction to the process of delusion ('khrul tshul), which represents the evolution of the impure karmic visions of Samsara. Yet following upon both physical death and psychic death, the state of emptiness and the Clear Light of Awareness manifest in all their nakedness, but the occurrence of enlightenment does not automatically follow, even though the full potentiality for this to occur is present from the very beginning. This is because of the simultaneous presence of an existential ignorance and the presence of karmic traces from past lifetimes beyond counting. The presence of this primordial ignorance bifabricates an initial non-dual awareness into subject and object, the I and the other, and the presence of karmic traces as the kleshas distort an originally free and unobstructed space into the claustrophobic spaces of the destinies of rebirth, wherein the karmic visions are perceived as solid, real, and opaque.

These two, liberation and delusion, are described in terms of the Base, the Path, and the Fruit. In the perspective of liberation, it is a journey of the Alone to the Alone, as Plotinus said. [25] That is to say, the path to liberation is a return to the source, whereas the path of delusion is to remain forever revolving in distraction out in space. But be that as it may, whatever may arise, it arises from the Natural State and eventually returns again to the Natural State. All forms and manifestations unfold out of the Natural State and again are enfolded back into it. All things in their timeless potentiality are contained within and are simultaneous present within the Natural State of the Nature of Mind. Thus, this Natural State, also known as the Unique Sphere (thig-le nyag-gcig), is the single source or Base from which both enlightenment and delusion, both Nirvana and Samsara, arise into manifestation and into which they dissolve again. Thus, even though there exists a single source or Base, there exist the two paths or processes of evolution called Nirvana and Samsara and the two Fruits or goals of an enlightened being and an ordinary deluded sentient being. These two processes are described in more detail in the translations below.

I. The Three Upadeshas

These the six essential points (gnad drug) concerning the process of vision known as Thodgal were originally expounded by Tapihritsa to Gyerpungpa in the form of brief Upadeshas. In Part Two, the six essential points refer to certain aspects of the practice of vision.

As an appendix to these six essential points that concern the Six Lamps for the process of vision, there are found two further elaborations:

1. the Three Upadeshas presented in brief (mdor bsdus kyi man-ngag), and
2. the Four Lamps for the Modes of Arising ('char tshul gyi sgron-ma bzhi).

These three Upadeshas (man-ngag rnam gsum) concern the Mother, which is the Kunzhi or the state of emptiness, the Son, which is Rigpa or the state of intrinsic Awareness, and their inseparability from the very beginning, as follows:

1. The Mother is the Essence of Mind; it is uncreated, empty, and completely pure, like the sky itself (ma sems kyi ngo-bo skye-med stong sangs nam-mkha' lta-bu).
2. The Son is the Gnosis of Awareness; it is without obscurations and inherently clear, like the heart of the sun (bu rig-pa'i ye-shes sgrib-med rang-gsal nyi-ma'i snying-po lta-bu).

3. The Mother and the Son are inseparable; they abide as the non-duality of luminous clarity and emptiness, like the sun rising in the (early morning) sky (ma bu dbyer-med gsal stong gnyis-med nam-mkha' la nyi-ma shar-ba ltar-bu).

Again, these three brief Upadeshas concerning the Base, the Path, and Fruit have been expounded by Tapihritsa and are elaborated upon below. [26]

IA. The Upadesha concerning the Base

The Upadesha concerning the Base (gzhi'i man-ngag) refers to the Kunzhi or the Mother which is the Essence of Mind (ma sems kyi ngo-bo). It is the Base (gzhi) or the Natural State which is the Essence (ngo-bo'i gnas-lugs). The Kunzhi is described as being uncreated, that is, not produced by any antecedent causes, as being empty, that is, being the state of emptiness itself, and as being completely pure, that is to say, primordially pure like the sky itself (skye-med stong sangs nam-mkha' lta-bu). Such metaphors were used, of course, before modern times when the atmosphere of the earth has become totally polluted by industrial waste and greenhouse gases. [27]

Even after physical death when the external breathing ceases, the circulation of psychic energy within the body continues for a time and the deceased consciousness undergoes the Chikhai Bardo, the experiences of dying. Finally, after some days this circulation of psychic energies stops and even the mind itself ceases to function, and one experiences the true death of the psyche. This is the moment of total eclipse or black-out, a moment of complete unconsciousness, where all that remains is the Natural State as the state of emptiness in its complete nakedness. But this state of emptiness is not a blank dark nothingness. Rather, it is a condition of open spaciousness and intrinsic freedom, a state of pure potentiality. It is felt as something quite positive and liberating, not a condition of deficiency or meaninglessness that need inspire fear, terror, or depression. [28]

Then, due to the inherent energy of that state (de'i rtsal las), which is locked into the dimension of the Natural State, the state of emptiness itself, there reawakens in the Bardo the initial manifestations of vibration and light. These self-manifestations, which are the sounds, the lights, and the rays (sgra 'od zer gsum rang-snang) arise like illusions (sgyu-ma lta-bur shar) as the expressions of the energies of the Nature of Mind. These photic phenomena also arise during the course of the practice of Thodgal and the dark retreat, which both serve as preparations for the Bardo experience. When that display of the Clear Light arising in the Bardo is understood as being just what one sees or perceives (de'i gnas-lugs ci lta-ba bzhin rtogs-pas), there will arise before the practitioner, who thus understands that they are just self-manifestations arising from the Natural State, all the virtuous qualities (yon-tan) of the sacred order of Nirvana in the form of pure visions. But when one does not understand and does not recognize them as manifestations of one's own Nature of Mind, then all the defects of Samsara or cyclical existence ('khor-ba'i skyon) are awakened into consciousness. These are the impure karmic visions of the profane order of Samsara and the various worldly destinies of rebirth. Nevertheless, these visions, whether pure or impure, arise unceasingly in a manner that is unobstructed ('gag-med kyi 'char tshul). Therefore, the Natural State becomes the basis (gzhir gyur) for both the coming forth into manifestation of the virtuous qualities of Nirvana and the defects of Samsara respectively (skyon yon thams-cad 'byung-ba' gzhir gyur-bas). And for this reason, it is called the Base (gzhi). It is this moment that represents the Boundary between Liberation and Delusion, the parting of the ways, one leading to Nirvana and intrinsic freedom and the other to Samsara and bondage to the passions in a endless cycle of death and rebirth.

IB. The Upadesha concerning the Path

Next there is the Upadesha concerning the Path (lam gyi man-ngag). The Base, which is the Natural State of the Nature of Mind, represents the non-duality of luminous clarity and emptiness (gsal stong gnyis-med). Its emptiness side or aspect (stong-cha) is called the Kunzhi. In general, the Kunzhi is called the Mother because the vast extent of space and the state of emptiness are felt to be maternal in nature-- It is the source and basis of everything. It gives birth to all possible phenomena and all possible universes, both pure and impure. Thus, the Kunzhi, the vast dimension of all existence (bon-nyid kyi dbyings), is the Great Mother. [29]

However, the Base also has its clarity side (gsal-cha), which is its awareness side (rig-cha) as well. This side represents the Son. The Son is the Gnosis of Awareness (rig-pa'i ye-shes); it is without obscurations and inherently clear, like the heart of the sun itself (bu rig-pa'i ye-shes sgrib-med rang-gsal nyi-ma'i snying-po lta-bu). And it has abided in its own

inherent form from the very beginning (rang la rang chas su ye nas gnas-pa). Although these two sides: emptiness and clarity, space and awareness, are equal and coefficient as the Bodhichitta or the Nature of Mind, generally it is felt that Rigpa is the child or the Son of the Mother, in he same way as one speaks of the sun as rising into the sky. Thus, in a sense, the sky gives birth to the sun. Whereas the sun rises above the horizon at dawn, the sky has been there all the time, whether it is daytime or night. But this is just a conventional symbolism employed for purposes of human discourse. Human beings see the sky as background and they see the orb of the sun as foreground and think of them as being separate, saying for example, that, "The sun is rising in the sky." Nevertheless, these are only metaphors. Emptiness and clear luminosity, space and awareness, Kunzhi and Rigpa-- these have been one and inseparable from the very beginning, that is, from before time came into being by virtue of the sequential ordering processes of the conceptualizing mind. The Base itself, the Natural State of the Nature of Mind, is beyond time. It is beyond the mind or thought process, just as the mirror is not the reflections. For us time orders events in a rigid linear sequence, whereas within the Natural State, which existed before creation and the cosmic order came into being, all events are simultaneously present in a single instant. Therefore, this is the base (gzhi) which contains all things and events (kun).

One is directly introduced to it (ngo-sprad-pas) by way of this profound Upadesha and so, thereafter, one will come to recognizes it (ngo-shes-pa). Thus, one's view or way of seeing will become unmistaken (lta-ba ma nor-ba yin). This unmistaken view is that of Dzogchen as cultivated within the practice of contemplation or Tregchod, where one remains continuously in the Natural State. Thus, whenever one encounters the Natural State or the Clear Light in the Bardo, one will immediately recognize them as old friends. And with respect to that, one is mindful (dran-pa) and one's clarity is without distraction (ma yengs-par gsal 'debs). That represents the meditation practice (sgom-pa) proper to Dzogchen as such. However, even though, this being in the state of contemplation of the Natural State is called meditation (sgom-pa), it is really non-meditation (sgom-med) because there is no discursive thoughts or activities of the mind present in it. Contemplation is a state that lies beyond the mind and its conditioned operations.

By means of uniting this view, which is Tregchod, and this meditation, which is Thodgal, the practitioner comes to forcefully and energetically purify (rtsal sbyangs nyams su blang) the sounds, the lights, and the rays which are the manifestations or visions of the Clear Light ('od-gsal gyi snang-ba). This especially refers to Thodgal, which in this text, is called the practice of the Clear Light. However, this does not mean that one's Thregchod must be developed and perfected over many years before engaging in Thodgal practice. In the perspective of the Dzogchen teachings of the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud, after being directly introduced to the Natural State, and developing a certain initial degree of stability in contemplation, one practices Tregchod and Thodgal together because they mutually stimulate and reinforce each other. One practices Thodgal while in the state of contemplation and this is Tregchod. Vision practice helps with the development of contemplation and contemplation is necessary for the development of vision. To practice vision without contemplation, without the practitioner remaining in the Natural State, is no better than watching the cinema or a television show and will do one no more good. The dimensions of sunlight, empty space, or total darkness are only the secondary conditions (rkyen) for the development of the visions. Their real cause (rgyu) and source is the Natural State of the Nature of Mind. This is the real meaning of linking together the view and the meditation.

By means of the gazes (lta-stangs) and the profound path of the method (thabs lam zab-mo), which is Thodgal, the sounds and the manifestations of the Clear Light are allowed to arise in a new-born and fresh manner ('phral du 'char-ba nus-pas). This is like the world appearing for the very first time at the dawn of creation. Because of consistent practice, one becomes familiar with these phenomena, and by means of forcefully and energetically purifying them (rtsal sbyangs-pas), the signs of success in practice along the path will become unmistaken. Having by way of forceful purification removed the clouds of obscurations, both emotional and conceptual, which veil and obstruct true vision, there will arise various manifestations which are pure visions of the divine forms, the celestial palaces, and the pure Buddha realms. These represent the various modes for the arising of the Clear Light ('od-gsal gyi 'char tshul).

The sounds, which are like distant echoes, come to be recognized as the inherent sounds of Awareness (sgra ni rig-pa'i rang sgra). The lights, which are like rainbows in the

sky, come to be recognized as the inherent lights of Awareness ('od ni rig-pa'i rang 'od). And the rays, which are like reflected images in a mirror, come to be recognized as the inherent rays of Awareness (zer ni rig-pa'i rang zer). Thereby one comes to understand that these divine forms (sku) or beatific visions of the celestial hierarchies merely present the inherent forms of one's own Awareness (rig-pa'i rang gzugs), much like the multiple images of the moon reflected on the waters below. Consequently, one unmistakenly comes to decide definitively upon the source of delusions ('khrul-pa'i phu thag-chod) and furthermore the emptiness of the source for the falseness of the visible appearances that arise (snang-ba'i rdzun phugs stongs) is clearly revealed. Thus, one cuts the root and foundation for the visions of both Samsara and Nirvana. And by remaining continuously in the Natural State, one transcends both of them. This will occur in the fourth stage in the development of vision, known as the final visions (snang-ba mthar-thug) or as the culmination and the exhaustion of reality. [-] Now, the inherited karmic causes for the visions of Reality have been entirely exhausted. Thus, one becomes the mirror and no longer the reflections. The Kunzhi, being without any obscurations and without any coverings by clouds, and Awareness or Rigpa arising in its total nakedness (rig-pa gcer-bur shar-ba) represents the true practice of contemplation and this constitutes the Upadesha of the Path.

IC. The Upadesha concerning the Fruit

Finally there is the Upadesha concerning the Fruit ('bras-bu'i man-ngag). Kunzhi and Rigpa, which represent the inseparability and the non-duality of luminous clarity and emptiness (gsal stong gnyis-med) from the very beginning, abide as the inherent nature of the Dharmakaya (bon-sku'i rang-bzhin du gnas). This is known as the state of total Primordial Purity (ka-dag chen-po) and this is what characterizes the Dharmakaya.

Whereupon these self-manifestations of the Nature of Mind, which are the sounds, the lights, and the rays (sgra 'od zer gsum), are spontaneously self-perfected (lhun gyis grub-pa) as the inherent nature of the five Gnoses (ye-shes lnga'i rang), that is, they manifest as five clear lights. As manifestations of Clear Light, they represent the Sambhogakaya. Then, due to a special understanding which is not discursive thought (rtogs ma rtogs kyi khyad-par las), there arise the various objects of the six sense aggregates (tshogs drug gi yul), the various sights and sounds of both Samsara and Nirvana ('khor 'das snang sgrags du-mar). This represents the Nirmanakaya, and in this way, the Trikaya is realized in its own form in terms of itself (rang la rang chas su grub-pa). And in terms of the Primordial State of the individual, the Trikaya are the Essence (ngo-bo), the Nature (rang-bzhin), and the Energy (thugs-rje).

Because one practices habitually in this present life, one stirs up the depths of Samsara ('khor-ba dong nas sprugs), that is, all the latent contents of the unconscious psyche accumulated over innumerable past lives, which thereupon arise to consciousness as impure karmic visions (ma dag las snang). And in this way, these delusions come to be purified into their own original condition ('khrul-pa rang shar sangs), that is to say, they are dissolved back into the condition of emptiness, their original source, by the practitioner remaining continuously in the Natural State of the Nature of Mind. These delusory manifestations which are one's impure karmic visions come to exhaust themselves effortlessly and are self-liberated without leaving any traces behind. In this way, through the practice of vision, the very karmic process itself comes to be exhausted eventually, this being known as the culminating state of vision practice (snang-ba bzhi), the final visions which represent the exhaustion of reality. The procedure here is known as self-liberation (rang-grol).

These karmic traces, which are both conscious and unconscious, represent the clouds of obscurations, both emotional and conceptual, that are cleared away, dissipated, and dissolved into sky of the Mind, the dimension of all existence that is vast, infinite, and unlimited. Thus, the clear, open spaces of the Kunzhi become clearly revealed, like the sky devoid of clouds, and the gnosis of Awareness (rig-pa'i ye-shes) arises in a totally all-pervading manner (khyab-bdal chen-po), like the brilliant orb of the sun rising above the horizon at dawn. Thereupon, just as with the rays of the sun, the magical apparitions or holographic structures of the Trikaya (sku gsum gyi cho-'phrul), which are the pure visions of the sacred order of Nirvana, arise in an inexhaustible manner (zad-pa med-par), like the rays of the sun illuminating the surface of the earth in the early morning with their brilliance. And each ray of light of this newly risen sun is a Nirmanakaya manifestation that accomplishes and continuously realizes the benefit of living beings ('gro don). Just as

the light and the warmth of the sun sustains, nourishes, and heals all living beings dwelling on the surface of the earth, so also do these emanations or Nirmanakaya projections of the Sambhogakaya, the central spiritual sun.

Then the Upadesha speaks of these individual practitioners of the path as having three different levels of spiritual capacity and, correspondingly, three different occasions or times for their realizing liberation. The various processes for the attaining of liberation (grol tshul) are described in much more detail below. But briefly, the individual of superior capacity (dbang-po rab) attains liberation in the Chikhai Bardo by entering into and remaining continuously in the Natural State. The individual of intermediate capacity (dbang-po 'bring-po) attains liberation in the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality (bon-nyid 'od-gsal gyi bar-do) when one recognizes the Clear Light to be the manifestation of one's own Nature of Mind. And the individual of inferior capacity (dbang-po tha-ma) passes through the Bardo experience and, continuing to transmigrate, attains a better rebirth where one may become liberated within a single lifetime.

II. The Four Lamps

These three brief Upadeshas are followed by the Four Lamps which represent the Modes of Arising ('char tshul gyi sgron-ma bzhi). The energy (rtsal) of the Base, which is inherent in it, expresses and embodies the non-duality of luminous clarity and emptiness (gzhi gsal stong gnyis-med kyi rtsal), that is to say, this inherent energy presents itself as the manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays that arise in an unobstructed and unceasing manner, whether in vision practice or in the Bardo. Their respective modes of arising ('char tshul) are given as four, here called Lamps (sgrom-ma), that is, processes of lighting up or illuminating and making visible. These manifestations are considered as follows:

1. The Lamp of Spontaneous Perfection in the Base: The sounds, the lights, and the rays that are spontaneously self-perfected in the Base (gzhi la lhun gyis grub-pa'i sgra 'od zer gsum). This refers to the process of vision in general, including the visions of everyday life in the ordinary waking state.
2. The Lamp of the Recent Conditions of Practice: The sounds, the lights, and the rays arise because of recent conditions or secondary causes ('phrul du rkyen gyis 'char-ba sgra 'od zer gsum). This refers to the arising of the Thodgal visions in practice. The secondary conditions (rkyen) refers to sunlight, the empty space of the sky, or the total darkness of the dark retreat which serve as the support for the manifestation of these visions.
3. The Lamp of the Signs on the Path: The sounds, the lights, and the rays that arise in experiences as signs along the path (lam rtags nyams la 'char-ba'i sgra 'od zer gsum). This refers to the manifesting of the signs of success in practice, such as signs indicating the purifying of the elements in terms of he psychic energies and the arising of pure visions.
4. The Lamp of the Time of the Bardo: The sounds, the lights, and the rays that arise at the time of the Bardo (bar-do dus kyis 'char-ba'i sgra 'og zer gsum). This refers to the manifestations of Clear Light and the visions of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities that arise in the Bardo.

IIA. Spontaneous Perfection in the Base

In terms of being spontaneously perfected with regard to the Base (gzhi la lhun gyis grub-pa): Due to the presence of the gnosis of one's own Awareness (rang rig-pa'i ye-shes), these manifestations which are the sounds, the lights, and the rays arise in a spontaneously self-perfected manner (rang rig-pa'i ye-shes las sgra 'od zer gsum lhun grub tu shar). They are complete and perfect just as they are, for they are the expressions of the clarity side (gsal-cha) of the Natural State.

Furthermore, it is the presence of the gnosis of Awareness (rig-pa'i ye-shes) that becomes clearly visible as light in space and this represents luminous clarity. This is the Fiat Lux or the first light at the time of creation, the first light of the dawn of Awareness. And from the vast expanse of the state of emptiness (stong-pa'i klong las), from the sphere spaciousness and openness of the primordial dimension, the initial manifestation of vibration is heard as sound, which at first is exceedingly subtle, like the distant rumble of thunder. This subtle sound has the quality of depth to it, as if vibrating across a great and vast distance. It is like an echo in the great mountains or the grand canyon. And from the state of their non-duality (gnyis-med kyi ngang las), the inseparability of light and sound, there come to emanate various colored rays of light (zer du 'phro). These rays have color and direction; they take on shapes and give rise to visible forms, to holographic structures

or magical apparitions (cho-'phrul). In this way, the visions of whole worlds come into being.

As for the location of the source of these manifestations of light and sound, they originate in the crystal having a hollow cavity, the reddish-brown pavilion of cornelian which is the physical heart (tsi-ta mchong gur smug-po shel gyi kha bad-can) in the middle of the human body. This organ is so called because it is hollow like a tent or pavilion and because of the similarity of its color to the semi-precious stone cornelian. The physical heart (tsi-ta) is also known as the Lamp of the Fleshly Heart (tsi-ta sha'i sgron-ma), whereas the the indwelling light of Awareness or Rigpa that resided at the center of the heart is known as the Lamp of the Base which abides (gnas-pa gzhi'i sgron-ma). The Base as such embodies the primordial inseparability of Kunzhi and Rigpa. Thus, in terms of the process of vision, the heart is the base; it is the source and residence of the inner light of Awareness.

The physical heart is connected to the eyes by way of a channel or nerve, a hollow translucent tube known as the Kati or the Lamp of the Smooth White Nerve (dkar 'jam rtsa'i sgon-ma). This is the pathway (lam) along which the light of Awareness arises. This light of Awareness which resides in the heart and which arises along this pathway of the translucent channel, is then projected out through the gateways (sgo) of the eyes where it becomes visible in the empty dimension of space in front as holographic visions. The emptiness of space, the matrix that gives birth to all possibilities, serves as the screen for the projection of this holographic cinema show that derives from the interior magic lantern of the heart. The eyes, being the lenses, are compared to globes of water and so are known as the Lamp of the Water globe-like Eye that lassoes at a distance (rgyang zhugs chu'i sgron-ma). The visions are projected through the gateways of all the sense faculties (dbang-po'i sgo la dod-pa). This interior light is first projected out into space and then is perceived or lassoed at a distance (rgyang zhugs). What is perceived as being out there are really holographic projections coming from within the individual. The visions of worlds seen there in outer space, whether pure or impure visions, are known as the Lamp of the Direct Introduction to the (external Pure and Impure) Realms (zhing-khams ngo-sprad kyi sgron-ma). But these visions of worlds, both pure and impure, do not represent any objective reality, but are projections and self-manifestations lacking any inherent existence. They are empty forms. These manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays arise spontaneously as expressions of the energy inherent in the Base; these phenomena are known as the natural Clear Light (rang-bzhin gyi 'od-gsal). This should be understood as the mode of arising with respect to the Base (gzhi'i 'char tshul du rtogs-par bya) and represents a summery of the process of vision in general.

IIB. Arising due to Recent Conditions

Having relied upon the essential points of the Upadeshas or explanations for Dzogchen and upon the methods of practice for Thodgal (man-ngag dang thabs kyi gnad), the sounds, the lights, and the rays come to emanate naturally from the Natural State which is the Base and they arise during practice as something clearly perceptible (mngon du 'char). This normal process of the projection and perception of vision has been explained above with reference to the first lamp. Their arising due to recent conditions ('phrul du rkyen gyis 'char-ba) means systematically engaging oneself in the practices of Thodgal and dark retreat. These practices provide the recent or secondary conditions for the arising of visions. And having relied upon these practices, one will become introduced directly to the fact that the lights that appear represent inherent light ('od rang 'od), the rays that appear represent inherent rays (zer rang zer), and the sounds represent that manifest inherent sounds (sgra rang sgra).

IIC. Arising as Signs along the Path

The procedures for the separating of impurity from the purity of Rigpa (rig-pa dangs snyigs phyed-pa) are explained in Part Two of the text. When one has practiced for some time, one will come to know purity (dangs-ma'i shes-pa), that is, when the pure visions arise during the course of practice with sunlight or in total darkness, there will arise both experiences and the signs of success in practice (nyams rtags su 'char). This is the meaning of the phrase referring to the arising of experiences and signs of success along the path (lam rtags nyams la 'char-ba). Because one has the capacity to hold and suspend the activities of the winds or psychic energies of the elements ('byung-ba'i rlung las su rung zhing zin-pas), it is possible that many different signs will arise. One should simply be aware that they merely represent the energy of the mind (sems kyi rtsal du shes-par bya).

Furthermore, inside of the bindus, or tiny spheres of light, one may see the divine forms of the Buddhas and the mandalas and the visions of various pure realms. One should become acquainted with these various signs of success in one's habitual practice until such time that one arrives at the ultimate realization, which is the dissolving of all forms back into the Natural State at the culmination of the stages in the development of vision. [30]

IID. Arising at the Time of the Bardo

Lastly, the mode of arising for the visions that come forth at the time of the Bardo (bar-dor dus kyis 'byung-ba) are considered. At the time when awareness or consciousness and the corpse have separated at the time of death (bem rig gnyis-po bral-ba'i tshe), the manifestations of the elements fire, water, earth, and air, become obstructed externally. [31] Following the cessation of the outer breathing (phyi dbugs), when one is declared clinically dead, the energies of the elements gradually dissolve into space. When this process is completed, the circulation of the psychic energies known as the inner breathing (nang dbugs) ceases and individual consciousness is absorbed back into the Natural State. This experience of a black-out, or unconsciousness, or a state of total emptiness, lasts for a few moments at least. Then internally the manifestations of sounds, the lights, and the rays begin to arise in the presence of intrinsic Awareness. Delusory appearances or impure karmic vision being temporarily obstructed ('khrul snang 'gags) because of the sensory deprivation following this second death, then during the course of five days the manifestations of the five clear lights arise, provided one has done the practice previously. The text is speaking now of the experience of the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality. Over a period of five days, in a purely symbolic sense however, the five clear lights successively arise. These clear lights called the five lights of the subtle channels (rtsa-ba'i 'od lnga). These represent the five clear lights of the Five Gnoses or Wisdoms (ye-shes lnga), namely, the white light of the gnosis of emptiness (stong-nyid ye-shes gyi 'od dkar), the yellow light of the mirror-like gnosis (me-long ser-po), the green light of the gnosis of sameness (mnyam-nyid ljang-khu), the red light of the gnosis of discrimination (so-so dmar-po), and the blue light of the gnosis of activity (bya-ba sngon-po). The signs of gnosis become clearly visible as these five clear lights (ye-shes kyi rtags 'od lngar gsal-ba) in the Bardo, and they are known as the five Essential Lights (snying-po'i 'od lnga). Note that the corresponding directions and colors differ somewhat from the usual Buddhist system. [32]

Originating from these five clear lights that represent the Five Gnoses, the five Dhyani Buddhas and the Buddha Families (rigs lnga) become clearly visible ('od lnga las rigs lngar gsal). From the white light in the center arises Shenlha (gshen-lha), from the yellow light in the east arises Serje (gsas-rje), from the green light in the north arises Garse (gar-gsas), from the red light in the west arises Namse (gnam-gsas), and from the blue light in the south arises Godse (rgod-gsas). They are called the five Lights which Diffuse Everywhere (mched-pa'i 'od lnga).

Furthermore, each of these five lights of the Sambhogakaya diffuse and spread everywhere throughout all times and all universes, proliferating as spheres of light, five into five. This process is known as the five Radiant Lights ('bar-ba'i 'od lnga), and in this way Nirmanakaya forms are emanated everywhere, like rays of the sun. But with respect to the individual colors and forms of these Nirmanakayas, they arise in an uncertain manner. These Nirmanakayas are called the five Lights which are Emanated ('phro-ba'i 'od lnga). And from these five colored lights originate the various different images of the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas that are generated (kha-dog lnga las byas-pa'i gzugs-brnyan sna-tshogs 'byung). These fivefold lights, multiplying and proliferating into infinity, arise without centers or boundaries, as an infinity of rainbows in the sky. Moreover, the rays arise as magical apparitions or holograms in an uncertain manner (cho-'phrul nges-med du 'char). Saying in an uncertain manner (nges-med) means there exists no rule nor prior determination regarding what possible forms may arise. The vibrations of the sounds may be noisy, coarse, pleasant sounding, and roaring (grags cing rtsub-pa snyan zhing ldir-ba). They are self-originated and uninterrupted in the same manner as thunder.

But if one does not understand and recognize them, one will grasp at them as being external and objectively real (gzhan snang bden-par bzung). Failing to recognize these visions of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities as being the self-manifestations of the Clear Light, one then falls into the Bardo of Existence which represents the beginning of the rebirth process (srid-pa). When fear and terror originate in response to these karmic visions, one should cut them off in the Bardo by means of Tantric transformation practices, such as the practices of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities (zhi khro), and these

self-manifestations seen in the Bardo should be known and clearly recognized to represent illusions (rang-snang sgyu-mar shes-par bya). This is the explanation of the Four Lamps concerning the modes for arising of visions.

PART TWO

The second text opens with a Homage that invokes the Primordial Buddha Kuntu Zangpo as one's own Self-Awareness that is without any obscurations whatsoever (kun tu bzang-po rang-rig sgrib-pa med la phyag 'tshal-lo). This aspect is the natural and inherent form (rang chas) of Rigpa, as it is in itself, like the orb of the sun high in the sky completely devoid of clouds. In the Clear Light experience occurring at the onset of the Bardo, this Rigpa is revealed in all its nakedness, totally unattired in the garments of body, mind, and karma, like the brilliant face of the sun totally free of clouds. This primordial and original nakedness represents the true countenance of Kuntu Zangpo.

This second text is properly a manual for the practice (bya-ba'i lag-len) of Thodgal, for which reason I have included the complete translation of the text in the second volume rather than in the first which focuses more on the view of Dzogchen. It appears that this second text was appended to the first, the gNad drug proper as instructions with regard to the preparations for Thodgal or Clear Light practice. The preface following the Homage states that, in order to guide those individuals possessing good fortune (skal-ldan), that is, those disciples who possess the ripened good karma to meet with and practice the Dzogchen teachings in this present lifetime, these six essential points outlined in this practice manual should be taught to them (lag-len gyi gnad drug bstan-par bya).

These six essential points are as follows:

I. the recognizing of the Kunzhi
[kun-gzhi ngos-bzung]
A. the separating of impurity from the purity of Rigpa
[rig-pa'i dangs snyig phye-ba]
A1. the separating of impurity from the purity of Rigpa
[rig-pa'i dangs snyig phye-ba]
A2. the direct introduction to the Natural State
[gnas-lugs la ngo-sprad-pa]
B. the recognizing the secondary causes of delusion
['khrul rkyen ngos-bzung]
B1. the recognizing the secondary causes of delusion
['khrul rkyen ngos-bzung]
B2. the cutting off of the source of delusions
['khrul-pa'i phugs bcad-pa]
II. the procedures for the interior arising of Self-Awareness
[rang-rig khong shar gyi lag-len]
III. the procedures for seeing Rigpa in its nakedness
[rig-pa gcer mthong gi lag-len]
A. the direct introduction through seeing the Essence (which is the Natural State) in its nakedness
[ngo-bo gcer mthong du ngo-sprad-pa]
B. the direct introduction through seeing the Clear Light in its nakedness
['od-gsal gcer mthong du ngo-sprad-pa]
IV. the procedures for clearly and definitively deciding upon the Trikaya in terms of practicing along the path in whatever manner
[lam ci ltar nyams su blangs-pa sku-gsum dmar thag-bcad-pa]
A. the direct introduction to one's own Trikaya in the three places as existing in their own form from the very beginning
[gnas gsum na sku-gsum rang la gdod nas rang chas su yod-pa]
B. the coming to a clear and definitive decision
[dmar thag-bcad-pa]
B1. the direct introduction to Rigpa which is the Essence itself and the coming to a clear and definitive decision regarding the Dharmakaya
[ngo-bo nyid kyi rig-pa la ngo-sprad dang bon-sku la dmar thag-bcad-pa]
B2. the direct introduction to Rigpa which represents Higher Insight and the coming to a clear and definitive decision regarding the Rupakaya
[lhag-mthong gi rig-pa la ngo-sprad dang gzugs-sku la dmar thag-bcad-pa]
B2.a. the direct introduction itself

[ngo-sprad-pa]
B2.a1. the direct introduction to the lights and rays
['od dang zer la ngo-sprad-pa]
b2.a2. the direct introduction to the sounds
[sgra la ngo-sprad-pa]
B2.b. the coming to a clear and definitive decision (regarding the actual practice)
[dmar thag-bcad-pa]
V. the methods for forceful purification
[rtsal gyi sbyang thabs]
VI. the procedures for practice in the Bardo
[bar-do nyams su len-pa'i lag-len]
VI. Practice in the Bardo

The translations of these first five of the six essential points concerning the practice listed above are omitted here because they do not pertain directly to the Bardo experience. As for the procedures for practice in the Bardo (bar-do nyams su len-pa'i lag-len), they will be dealt with below in the translations and commentaries that follow, where they are considered to represent the various processes of liberation (grol tshul).

In terms of the spiritual path generally, which is here called Bon or the Dharma, there exist three types of practitioner:

1. the individual of superior spiritual capacity (dbang-po rab),
2. the individual of intermediate spiritual capacity (dbang-po 'bring-po), and
3. the individual of inferior spiritual capacity (dbang-po tha-ma).

To this threefold classification is sometimes added a fourth category, namely, the individual of exceedingly superior spiritual capacity (dbang-po yang rab). In terms of the latter, such an individual can attain liberation and enlightenment during one's lifetime without the necessity to undergo the process of dying and realize what is known in the Dzogchen tradition as the Great Transfer ('pho-ba chen-po). [33] Otherwise, the individual must experience the process of dying, both physically and psychically, and thereafter transit through the Bardo experiences.

But, speaking in general, the individual with a superior spiritual capacity has been directly introduced previously to the Natural State and has purified one's obscurations by way of the consistent and regular practice of contemplation (khregs-chod). In addition, one has been taught the instructions concerning the various self-arisings of gnosis being of a single taste (ye-shes rang shar du-ma ro-gcig gi gdams-pa), that is, they are all equally empty and represent self-manifestations arising from the Natural State. Such an individual can enter into and remain in the Natural State while dying and thus attains liberation at the level of the Dharmakaya. This process of dying is known as the Chikhai Bardo, from 'chi-kha, "death, dying," and bar-do, "intermediate state." This is the interval between the moment when the external breathing (phyi dbugs) ceases, what is known as physical death, and the moment days later when the internal breathing (nang dbugs), or circulation of the psychic energy, ceases. This later represents a true psychic death, the actual cessation of all mental activity, even the most subtle, leaving only the Natural State of the Nature of Mind in its total nakedness.

After this brief moment of black-out or total unconsciousness when the mechanisms of the mind have completely stopped operating, with the onset of the Bardo experience, the Clear Light initially dawns in the vast dimension of space. The individual of an intermediate spiritual capacity, having realized the power of purification (sbyang stobs), that is to say, by way of the practices of Tregchod and Thodgal during one's lifetime prior to death, and having been taught the instructions for being without desires and attachments (chags-med zhen-med kyi gdams-pa) with regard to whatever visions, positive or negative, may arise in the Bardo, recognizes this Clear Light as the self-manifestation of one's own Nature of Mind. And these self-manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays, that arise are regarded as being like illusions. In this way, because one recognizes their real nature, one becomes liberated in the Bardo of the Clear Light ('od-gsal gyi bar-dor grol-bar 'gyur), attaining liberation and enlightenment at the Sambhogakaya level. The Dharmakaya is, in itself, totally without any form or limitations whatsoever and it is connected with realization of Shunyata, the state of emptiness and total spaciousness. Whereas the Sambhogakaya is connected with the Clear Light and phenomena of pure light devoid of all gross materiality. So, this Bardo experience is known as the Bardo of Reality (chos-nyid bar-do) in the Buddhist texts and the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality (bon-

nyid 'od-gsal gyi bar-do) in the Bonpo texts of Dzogchen. Within this Bardo or intermediate dimension, during the course of the evolution or unfolding of the Clear Light of Reality, the various luminous visions of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities manifest to consciousness. At any point in this process of unfolding, one may come to recognize these pure visions as self-manifestations of the Clear Light of one's own Nature of Mind and thereby liberate as the Sambhogakaya.

But failing to recognize the Clear Light of Reality, the stream of consciousness of the individual (rnam-shes) flows onward into the dimensions of the Bardo of Existence (srid-pa'i bar-do) and begins to undergo the process of rebirth. Here the individual of an inferior spiritual capacity, one who has a feeble or weak ability for the purification of one's obscurations by way of the practice of contemplation, must in general undergo the full extent of the Bardo experience. But if such an individual has been taught the instructions for Phowa or the transference of consciousness ('pho-ba'i gdams-pa), as well as having devotion to the meditation deity (yi-dam gyi lha) and the Guru (bla-ma), there can appear pure visions or manifestations (dag-pa'i snang-bar 'char), even though there will arise a multitude of impure karmic visions in the Bardo of Existence (srid-pa bar-do'i snang-ba 'char). For example, the experienced practitioner may invoke the presence of one's Yidam, or even transform into the visible aspect of that deity and thereby subdue and control the various karmic visions arising in the Bardo. This is a process much like lucid dreaming found in dream yoga. By means of that method, the accomplished practitioner can even come to consciously choose one's future rebirth. And having been reborn into some pure realm (zhing-khams dag-par skyes) among the Devas, or into a place among humans where the teachings of Dzogchen have spread, and having received these teachings once again and practiced them, experiencing the Natural State for oneself, one will come to attain liberation within a single lifetime in a future existence. This is the Upadesha for cutting off the current of karma in terms of a single Bardo experience (bar-do gcig chod kyi man-ngag).

Colophon

The colophon at the conclusion of this second text also refers to the six essential points for the procedures of the practice manual (lag-len gyi gnad drug) and to a description of the arising to consciousness of experiences and understanding (nyams rtogs dang 'char tshul rdzogs) derived from the practice. Furthermore, one is instructed to teach this text only to a worthy disciple belonging to the Lineage of the Masters and to restrict this to a single transmission (gcig rgyud). However, this procedure of transmission to only a single disciple has now fallen into abeyance due to circumstances in later generations.

The colophon further indicates that the teachings of the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud had been transmitted to Trapa Chenpo (bkra-pa chen-po), "the great monk," belonging to the earlier Lama Ya-ngal lineage (bla-ma ya-ngal brgyud-pa), that is to say, to Nyamnyid Sherab Gyaltsan (mNyam-nyid Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan), the great Bonpo master and scholar who founded Menri monastery in the fifteenth century. According to Lopon Tenzin Namdak, he belonged to the Ya-ngal clan which now only survives in Dolpo in Nepal.

[This commentary was composed by Vajranatha, John Myrdhin Reynolds, Holte, Denmark, November 1997.]

PART TWO

SETTING SIDE BY SIDE THE FOUR WHEELS: 'KHOR-LO BZHI SBRAG

Here is contained "The Setting Side by Side of the Four Wheels" from the Oral Tradition of Zhang-zhung for the Great Perfection Teachings (rdzogs-pa chen-po zhang-zhung snyan rgyud las 'khor-lo bzhi sbrag bzhugs-so).

PREFACE

Homage to the Masters of the Lineage!

According to The Mirror of the Mind belonging to the Oral Transmission, "If one does not know the instructions for setting side by side the Four Wheels, then the teacher who elucidates the mind-stream is merely like a guest without any kin or attendants." So it is said.

These Four Wheels are as follows:

1. the Wheel of the Base that abides,
2. the Wheel of the Interdependent Origination due to either Understanding or to Delusion,
3. the Wheel of the Channels that represent the Essential Points of the Body, and
4. the Wheel of the Time of the Bardo.

These are the four.

Furthermore, if one does not know the Wheel of the Base that abides (that is, the Natural State which is the Nature of Mind), then one does not know the manner in which the Trikaya are already complete (and perfected and wholly present) with respect to the mind (that is, the Nature of Mind). If one does not know the Wheel of the Interdependent Origination due to either Understanding or to Delusion, then one does not know the common source of both Samsara and Nirvana. If one does not know the Wheel of the Channels that represent the essential points of the body, then one cannot sever the root for the basis of delusion and infatuation with this aggregate, the physical body. And if one does not know the Wheel of the Time of the Bardo, then one will not separate and distinguish between liberation and delusion (after one has died.)

I. THE WHEEL OF THE BASE THAT ABIDES

With respect to that (the knowing of these Four Wheels or cycles of teaching), the first is the Wheel of the Base that abides.

1. The Mandala of the Dharmakaya

From the earliest times, within the three times, from time without beginning or end: At a time when there existed ignorance on the part of every individual regarding these two, Samsara and Nirvana, how did the Kunzhi exist in its natural disposition? It abided like the sky, without falling into any distinctions or partialities. And with regard to that, intrinsic Awareness arose of itself from out of the vast expanse of the Kunzhi. This represented a luminous clarity and it abided without discursive thoughts, like the heart of the sun in the sky. They (the Kunzhi and the Rigpa) have been without any duality from the very beginning (that is, primordially). Therefore, this is known as the non-duality of Dimension and Gnosis. Moreover, that condition represents the Mandala of the Dimension of the Dharmakaya.

2. The Mandala of the Sambhogakaya

Kunzhi and Rigpa are without any duality. With respect to that, the three great manifestations (that is to say, the sounds, the lights, and the rays) occur spontaneously perfected without any deliberate effort (on one's part). As for the five lights, they abide in the manner of sunlight and rainbow palaces (as when sunlight is refracted through a crystal and thereby creating rainbow patterns). As for the sounds, they represent the inherent sounds of emptiness which is the Dharmata or Ultimate Reality. They resound uninterruptedly in the vast expanse of the Kunzhi. And as for the rays and the bindus (or tiny spheres of light), as well as the immeasurable celestial palaces and pavilions and the divine forms and images-- they all abide in the manner of a luminous network of sun beams. Since these three manifestations that are like that and the King who is one's own Knowing Awareness are linked together with them in pairs, it is possible, therefore, for everything within Samsara and Nirvana to originate and come forth unceasingly in their spontaneous perfection. This represents the Mandala of the Sambhogakaya.

3. The Mandala of the Nirmanakaya

Due to this non-duality of Dimension and Gnosis, the three great manifestations arise unceasingly and unobstructedly. With respect to that process, having relied upon the secondary causes which are understanding or not understanding, the magical apparitions

constituting Nirvana and Samsara may arise anywhere. And these phenomena represent the Mandalas of the Nirmanakaya that may emanate and appear everywhere (throughout the three times and throughout all the dimensions of the entire universe). In that way, with respect to the King who is one's own Knowing Awareness, the Trikaya (of the Base) are perfected from the very beginning.

This cycle of teaching is known as the Wheel of the Base that abides.

II. THE WHEEL OF INTERDEPENDENT ORIGINATION

Second, as for the Wheel of the Interdependent Origination due to either understanding or to delusion:

In the presence of the King who is one's own Knowing Awareness, it is possible for both Samsara and Nirvana to issue forth unceasingly in their full spontaneous perfection. However, it is the case that Nirvana arises from understanding, whereas Samsara arises from not understanding.

A. The Arising of Nirvana

As for the process for the arising of Nirvana: At the time when there arise perceptibly the three visible objects (which are the sounds, the lights, and the rays), they are well recognized by the mental consciousness (or Manovijnana) as being self-manifestations. The secondary conditions having been created by these manifestations, the King who is Awareness comes to recognize himself. Since he knows and is aware of them, he does not follow after them on the side of manifestation. And since he does not follow after these manifestations (or visions), the visions themselves are subdued and vanquished by the King who is Awareness. Thereby he obtains his own power and independence with respect to all visions or appearances. And because he has obtained independence, the emanations of Nirvana unfold powerfully.

Furthermore, with respect to this (the evolution of the visions of Nirvana), there unfold

1. the five lights that manifest visibly,
2. the five dimensions of the elements,
3. the five vast expanses of the Baga,
4. the five bases that give support,
5. the five limbs that are great gestures,
6. the six treasuries from which originate everything,
7. the five sense faculties that are unpolluted,
8. the five sense consciousnesses that are unobscured,
9. the five sense objects that are completely pure,
10. the five Deities that are realized,
11. the five Bodies that abide,
12. the five Families that arise,
13. the five powers that are without defect,
14. the five gnoses that are luminously clear,
15. the five fruits that are unsurpassed,
16. the five Mandalas of the Great Perfection, and
17. the five realms that arise perceptibly.

As for the five lights that manifest visibly: From the empty Essence of the King who is one's own Knowing Awareness arises the azure light. From his Nature which is clear luminosity arises the white light. From his unceasing and unobstructed Energy or Compassion arises the red light. From his unchanging virtuous Qualities arises the yellow light. And from his all-pervading Activities arises the green light.

As for the five dimensions of the pure elements: From the white light, there arises the dimension of the spiritual element of space. From the green light, there arises the dimension of the spiritual element of air. From the red light, there arises the dimension of the spiritual element of fire. From the blue light, there arises the dimension of the spiritual element of water. And from the yellow light, there arises the dimension of the spiritual element of earth.

As for the five vast expanses of the Baga (or vagina): From the white light, she arises as the vast expanse of the Space Goddess. From the green light, she arises as the vast expanse of the Air Goddess. From the red light, she arises as the vast expanse of the Fire Goddess. From the blue light, she arises as the vast expanse of the Water Goddess. And from the yellow light, she arises as the vast expanse of the Earth Goddess.

As for the five bases that give support: From the white light, the base which is the support for the purity of space and mind arises as the heart that grasps the channels. From the green light, the base which is the support for the purity of air and breath arises as the lungs that grasp the breath. From the red light, the base which is the support for the purity of fire and heat arises as the heart that grasps the heat. From the blue light, the base which is the support for the purity of water and blood arises as the kidneys that grasps the blood. And from the yellow light, the base which is the support for the purity earth and flesh arises as the stomach that grasps the flesh.

As for the five limbs that are great gestures: From the white light arises the emanation of the head, the limb of space. From the green light arises the emanation of the right leg, the limb of air. From the red light arises the emanation of the right arm, the limb of fire. From the blue light arises the emanation of the left leg, the limb of water. And from the yellow light arises the emanation of the left arm, the limb of earth.

As for the five treasuries from which originate everything: From the white light arises the treasury which holds the Manas (the functional mind), making everything clearly visible and free of materiality. From the green light arises the treasury which holds the breath, causing things to be lifted up and to be liberated. From the red light arises the treasury which holds the heat, making things to be clearly visible and to radiate. From the blue light arises the treasury which holds the blood, making things moist and curing everything. And from the yellow light arises the treasury which holds the flesh, making things solid and producing everything.

As for the five sense faculties that are unpolluted: From the white light arises the door of the sense faculty of the eye which distinguishes the clear colors. From the green light arises the door of the sense faculty of the nose which distinguishes aromas clearly. From the red light arises the door of the sense faculty of the tongue which is a wheel liberating everything. From the blue light arises the door of the sense faculty of the ear which distinguishes among the hosts of different sounds. And from the yellow light arises the door of the sense faculty of the body which distinguishes the touches where everything comes into contact.

As for the sense consciousnesses that are unobscured: From the white light arises eye consciousness which is the primal awareness as the clarity of the eye. From the green light arises nose consciousness which is compassionate energy in relation to the clarity of smell. From the red light arises tongue consciousness which is reality in relation to the clarity of taste. From the blue light arises ear consciousness which is the clarity of pure sounds. And from the yellow light arises body consciousness which is the clarity of touch in terms of what is real.

As for the five sense objects that are completely pure: From the white light arises the sphere of activity of the eye which represents completely pure visible forms. From the green light arises the sphere of activity of the nose which represents completely pure smells. From the red light arises the sphere of activity of the tongue which represents completely pure tastes. From the blue light arises the sphere of activity of the ears which represents completely pure sounds. And from the yellow light arises the sphere of activity of the body which represents completely pure touch sensations.

As for the five Deities that are realized: From the white light arises the Family of Shenlha (gshen-lha) in the central direction. From the green light arises the family of Garse (gar-gsas) in the northern direction. From the red light arises the family of Namse (gnam-gsas) in the western direction. From the blue light arises the Family of Godse (rgod-gsas) in the southern direction. And from the yellow light arises the Family of Serje (gsas-rje) in the eastern direction.

As for the five Bodies that abide: From the white light arises the Dharmakaya. From the green light arises the Svabhavikakaya. From the red light arises the Nirmanakaya which can emanate everywhere. From the blue light arises that Abhisiddhakaya. And from the yellow light arises the Sambhogakaya.

As for the five Families that arise: From the white light arises the Tathatakula in the central direction. From the green light arises the Karmakula in the northern direction. From the red light arises the Padmakula in the western direction. From the blue light arises the Ratnakula in the southern direction. And from the yellow light arises the Svastikakula in the eastern direction.

As for the five powers that are without defects: From the white light arises the power of total friendliness. From the green light arises the power of total peacefulness. From the

red light arises the power of total expansiveness. From the blue light arises the power of total generosity. And from the yellow light arises the power of total knowledge.

As for the five gnoses that are luminously clear: From the white light arises the gnosis of emptiness. From the green light arises the gnosis of the sameness of everything. From the red light arises the gnosis which understands discriminatively. From the blue light arises the gnosis of exertion in activities. And from the yellow light arises the mirror-like gnosis.

As for the five fruits that are unsurpassed: From the white light arises Mind without delusions. From the green light arise the Qualities which originate excellently. From the red light arises the Speech whose nature is unceasing. From the blue light originate the Activities that are spontaneously perfected without striving. And from the yellow light arises the Body that is unchanging.

As for the five Mandalas of the Great Perfection: From the white light arises the mandala of space where everything is visible and caused to be clear. From the green light arises the mandala of air where things are levitated and friction occurs. From the red light arises the mandala of fire where things are made visible and luminosity is diffused. From the blue light arises the mandala of water which brings about healing and which spreads everywhere. And from the yellow light arises the mandala of earth which causes reproduction and which is unchanging, stable, and firm.

As for the five realms that arise visibly: From the white light arises the realm of Lhungyi Drubpa in the central direction, the field that is spontaneously perfected. From the green light arises the realm of Nampar Dagpa in the northern direction, the field that is completely pure. From the red light arises the realm of Dewachan in the western direction, the field that possesses bliss. From the blue light arises the realm of Wangdan Kodpa in the southern direction, the field where re arrayed those possessing power. And from the yellow light arises the realm of Ngonpar Gawa in the eastern direction, the field that is manifestly delightful.

As for all of that (these visions of Nirvana herein delineated), it is Kuntu Zangpo who is the cause for this Primordial Buddhahood.

B. The Arising of Samsara

As for the process for the arising of Samsara when one does not understand:

At the time when the three visible objects arise perceptibly, because these three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, arise as objects to the thought process itself, one's awareness or consciousness, consisting of thoughts, memories, and cognitions, falls into confusion regarding these very objects. And thereby, it does not recognize them as being self-manifestations (of mind), but grasps at their distinctive characteristics as representing real entities (existing objectively). Because these three objects have created the requisite secondary causes, countless delusory appearances now arise to obscure the Bodhichitta (the actual Nature of Mind). Because of the presence of these memories, cognitions, and thoughts, one does not come to recognize one's own Self-Awareness. Thereby, because of the power of this ignorance, consciousness moves out to its object. And not remaining in its own original condition, it pursues and follows after these appearances. And since it follows after appearances, it looses its independence. And because its independence is lost, it is deceived by appearances (into believing that they are) due to another (cause than themselves). They, therefore, represent illusions. And because one is deceived by delusions, the evolution or interdependent origination of Samsara unfolds.

Furthermore, (with respect to that, the arising of the visions of Samsara) there occur

0. the five lights that manifest visibly,
1. the five causes of the elements in the external world,
2. the five nectars of the elements that are internal,
3. the five internal organs that give support,
4. the five limbs that arise as skillful actions,
5. the five internal vessels that accumulate,
6. the five doors of the senses,
7. the five consciousnesses that discriminate among things,
8. the five objects that are spheres of activity (for the senses),
9. the five poisons that represent the causes (of Samsara),
10. the five behavioral activities deriving from secondary causes,
11. the five aggregates that are fruitional,
12. the five diseases from the humors,

13. the five doorways to birth,
14. the five paths for transmigration,
15. the five fruits that are ripened, and
16. the five realms that arise visibly.

Furthermore, due to the energies of these five lights and of Rigpa which is united and linked together with them, (there unfold the following:)

As for the elements in the external world: From the energy of the white light arises the external space element. From the energy of the green light arises the external air element. From the energy of the red light arises the external fire element. From the energy of the blue light arises the external water element. And from the energy of the yellow light arises the external earth element.

As for the effects of the elements that are the internal nectars: From the energy of the white light arises the internal element of consciousness. From the energy of the green light arises the internal element of breath. From the energy of the red light arises the internal element of heat. From the energy of the blue light arises the internal element of blood. And from the energy of the yellow light arises the internal element of flesh.

As for the five internal organs that give support: The support for the space element is functioning in the heart. The support for air element is functioning in the lungs. The support for fire element is functioning in the liver. The support for water element is functioning in the kidneys. And the support for earth element is functioning in the spleen.

As for the five limbs that arise as skillful activities: The limb of the space element arises as the head. The limb of the air element arises as the right leg. The limb of the fire element arises as the right arm. The limb of the water element arises as the left leg. And the limb of the earth element arises as the left arm.

As for the five internal vessels that accumulate (these nectars): The vessel for the accumulating of the nectar of the space element arises as the testacles. The vessel for the accumulating of the nectar of the air element arises as the large intestines. The vessel for the accumulating of the nectar of the fire element arises as the gall bladder. The vessel for the accumulating of the nectar of the water element arises as the urinary bladder. And the vessel for the accumulating of the nectar of earth arises in the stomach.

As for the five doors of the senses: The door of the space element arises as the sense organ of the eye. The door of the air element arises as the sense organ of the nose. The door of the fire element arises as the sense organ of the tongue. The door of the water element arises as the sense organ of the ear. And the door of the earth element arises as the sense organ of the body.

As for the five consciousnesses that discriminate among things: From the energy of the space element arises the eye consciousness. From the energy of the air element arises the nose consciousness. From the energy of the fire element arises the tongue consciousness. From the energy of the water element arises the ear consciousness. And from the energy of the earth element arises the body consciousness.

As for the five objects which are spheres of activity: The object which is the space element is activity with respect to forms. The object which is the air element is activity with respect to smells. The object which is the fire element is activity with respect to tastes. The object which is the water element is activity with respect to sounds. And the object which is the earth element is activity with respect to touch.

As for the five poisons that are the causes (of Samsara): From the energy of the space element arises the emotional defilement of anger. From the energy of the air element arises the emotional defilement of pride. From the energy of the fire element arises the emotional defilement of envy. From the energy of the water element arises the emotional defilement of greed. And from the energy of the earth element arises the emotional defilement of confusion.

As for the five behavioral activities deriving from secondary causes: From anger arise the activities of cursing thoughts, malicious thoughts, and wrong views. From pride arise the activities of foolish talk, wandering words, slanders, and lies. From envy arise the activities of belittling, maliciousness, and denigrating. From greed arise the activities of avarice, miserliness, and the desire to possess. And from confusion arise the activities of cutting off life, theft, and wrong desires.

As for the five aggregates or skandhas that are fruitional: Because (consciousness) is linked with the activities of anger, there arises the aggregate of consciousness (the vijnana-skandha). Because (impulses) are linked with the activities of pride, there arises the

aggregate of the impulses (the samskara-skandha). Because (perceptions) are linked with the activities of envy, there arises the aggregate of the perceptions (the samjna-skandha). Because (feelings) are linked with the activities of greed, there arises the aggregate of the feelings (the vedana-skandha). And because (forms) are connected with the activities of confusion, there arises the aggregate of forms (the rupa-skandha).

As for the five diseases (deriving from imbalances) in terms of the humors: From the energy of the space element arise the four kinds of humor diseases. From the energy of the air element arise the humor diseases of wind. From the energy of the fire element arise the humor diseases of bile. From the energy of the water element arise the humor diseases of phlegm. And from the energy of the earth element arise the diseases that are combinations of diseases.

As for the five doorways to birth: From the energy of the space element arise the doorways to the four kinds of birth. From the energy of the air element arises the doorway to apparitional birth. From the energy of the fire element arises the doorway to birth from heat. From the energy of the water element arises the doorway to birth from the egg. And from the energy of the earth element arises the doorway to birth from the womb.

As for the five pathways of transmigration: From the energy of the space element arises the pathway for proceeding into rebirth in the hell realms. From the energy of the air element arises the pathway for proceeding into rebirth among the Devas and the Asuras. From the energy of the fire element arises the pathway for proceeding into rebirth among the humans. From the energy of the water element arises the pathway for proceeding into rebirth among the Pretas. And from the energy of the earth element arises the pathway for proceeding into rebirth among the animals.

As for the five realms which are ripened: Due to the power of anger, one ripens the realms of hell. Due to the power of pride, one ripens the realms of the Devas and the Asuras. Due to the power of envy, one ripens the realm of the human beings. Due to the power of greed, one ripens the realm of the Pretas. And due to the power of confusion, one ripens the realms of the animals.

As for the five fields that arise: Due to the power of anger, there arises the field possessing great suffering (the hell realms). Due to the power of pride, there arise the field possessing bliss (the Deva realms) and the field possessing conflict (the Asura realms). Due to the power of envy, there arises the field of human beings possessing merit. Due to the power of greed there arises the field possessing hunger and thirst (the Preta realms). And due to the power of confusion, there arises the field possessing intoxication (the various animal rebirths).

That is the reason for the wanderings in Samsara of those sentient beings who belong to the three worlds.

In conclusion, having depended upon the secondary condition of understanding or not understanding the matter in that way, there arise these two, Nirvana and Samsara, respectively. The King who is Knowing Awareness represents the Base for the both of them and it originates from the Bodhichitta (that is to say, the Nature of Mind). But if one recognizes oneself as this King who is Awareness, then there will not even exist the names or appellations of these two, Samsara and Nirvana.

This teaching cycle is known as the Wheel of the Interdependent Origination due either to Understanding or to Delusion.

III. THE WHEEL OF THE CHANNELS

As for the Wheel of the Channels which represent the essential points of the body:

At the time when the body and the mind coalesce due to the power of karma (that is, at the time of conception and the growth of the embryo in the womb), the body, which is the physical aggregate or skandha, corresponds to the mass of the Meru mountain. The Tsita (or physical heart) corresponds to an immeasurable pavilion of jewels. The four internal organs and four vessels correspond to (the elements of) fire, water, earth, and air. The three principal channels correspond to the tree of life and to the trunk of the wish-granting tree. The four chakras correspond to the four basal sages or steps of the Meru mountain. The lesser branch channels correspond to the branches of the wish-granting tree. The major limbs and minor members of the body correspond in manner to the four great continents and the lesser continents. The external skin corresponds to the outer circumference of the earth which is the ring of iron mountains. The five sense organs correspond to the sun, moon, planets, and stars. The five guts correspond to the wealth-

storage treasuries within the Meru mountain. And finally, (the internal elements of) flesh, blood, heat, and breath correspond to the four seasons.

However, even though the Kunzhi and the Rigpa reside from the very beginning in the heart, in general they pervade the entire body, without any exterior or interior.

Due to the five lights and the energies of the five elements, the five internal organs come to function as supports for the five elements (in the body). The five limbs arise as expressions of the energies of the five elements. The five guts serve to accumulate the nutrients of the five elements. The five senses arise as the doorways of the five elements and generate individually the energies of the five sense consciousnesses providing enjoyment in terms of the five sense objects which are external.

In the same way, even though the King who is Awareness pervades the entire body generally, Self-Awareness, arising in the interior, principally abides in the middle of the Tsita or physical heart. Here, in the center of a lotus of eight petals, representing knots in the channels, the five pure radiances of the elements abide. And the pure radiances of the channels abide just like threads of white silk. The pure radiance of the breath abides just like very subtle vapors and breezes. The pure radiance of heat abides just like a vapor on a mirror struck by the sun. The pure radiance of the blood abides just as a stream of vapor that is purified with respect to the stone from which vermilion is made. And the pure radiance of the flesh abides just like vapors located on the golden surface of the earth.

As for the Kunzhi, it abides like the sky devoid of clouds, whereas the Rigpa abides like the sun that is free from darkness. And the sounds, the lights, and the rays abide like a butter lamp placed inside a vase. The Manovijnana, or mental consciousness, arises in a manner corresponding to the rays of the light of the sun.

In the same way, that heart-essence (that is, Rigpa) which has abided from the very beginning, resides in the middle of the physical heart as its base. The path is the pathway of the central channel and, having come forth directly, the gate is the gateway of the eyes, and it (Rigpa) arises there (before the eyes) as self-arising (phenomena in the space in front of oneself).

Similarly, with direct reference to this skandha (the physical embodiment of the individual), by way of the instructions of the Guru, one is directly introduced to Rigpa, or intrinsic Awareness, which is the essence itself. And thereby one comes to decide clearly and definitively upon what is the basis of delusion. Being directly introduced to Rigpa, which represents higher insight, one comes to decide clearly and definitively upon what are the secondary causes or conditions for delusion. Moreover, mental consciousness, the Manovijnana, arises as an expression of the energy of the Kunzhi. And being directly introduced to the non-duality of the Mother and the Son in terms of mind (that is, the Nature of Mind), one comes to decide clearly and definitively upon what is the essence of delusion.

In the same way, there exist these three to be considered: the basis of delusion, the secondary causes of delusion, and the essence of delusion. Because one has clearly and definitively decided upon just what is the Bodhichitta (or the Nature of Mind), it is no longer possible for delusions to appear in the places of Samsara. And having severed the root of delusion, one will obtain liberation without further recourse to the Bardo. Because of that, it is not possible for delusion to reappear in the places of Samsara. Therefore, one may sever the roots of delusion and attain liberation without passing through the Bardo.

This teaching is known as the Wheel of the Channels that represent the essential points of the body.

IV. THE WHEEL OF THE TIME OF THE BARDO

As for what is known as the Wheel of the Time of the Bardo:

A. Liberation in the Bardo

Because of having clearly and definitively come to a decision (regarding Rigpa and the Natural State) while still in the physical body (of this present lifetime), the individual of superior spiritual capacity obtains liberation without needing to undergo the Bardo experience. However, the individual of intermediate spiritual capacity will be able to obtain liberation in the Bardo of the Clear Light as indicated below. Externally, the manifestations of fire, water, earth, and air having ceased, (internally) the manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays arise. And (one's consciousness) having been separated from the material body, Rigpa now comes to abide without any physical support. At that time and in this way, everything that appears (to consciousness) will arise as the realms of the five lights. The rays will arise as magical apparitions in an uncertain manner, like the opening

up of a woolen blanket or of a silken cloth (in the bright sunlight). And the sounds will arise discontinuously in the manner of sounds in the nostrils and these represent the inherent sounds of emptiness of the Dharmata or Ultimate Reality. For those individuals who are intimately acquainted with them and habitually practice in this way, (the above lights and rays) arise as visions of perfect divine bodies and mandalas.

Furthermore, Rigpa is the basis for the arising of the Body of Light having a miniature size. And one's own body manifests as (an aura of) light one fathom in extent, without any front or back. In the spaces of the ten directions of that (aura), there will arise innumerable celestial pavilions of bindus or tiny spheres of rainbow light. In the centers of these fivefold celestial pavilions arise the fivefold mandalas of the Body (that is, the divine forms of enlightened beings). Due to the basis for the arising of this miniature-sized Body of Light having been present at the center of one's physical heart, (this display) now arises in this way in the spaces of the five directions.

And at this time, the six clairvoyant powers or knowledges and the six recollections having arisen, one will obtain liberation. By means of these six clairvoyant knowledges, one will know clairvoyantly both past and future lives. One will know clairvoyantly the causes and the consequences of karma. One will know clairvoyantly both the pure and the impure realms. At the times when the sounds, the lights, and the rays arise, one will come to know that the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality actually exists. And here at this time, since one has been directly introduced to them by the Guru, one will know that these three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, are self-manifestations. Moreover, one will know clairvoyantly the Natural State which is the King who is one's own Knowing Awareness.

As for the six recollections , they originate at the same time as these clairvoyant knowledges. At first one will remember that one has departed from this present life. Then one will remember that the Bardo exists. Then one will remember that Rigpa abides without any material support. Having relied upon that, one will remember the manifestations which occur at this time. One will remember the Guru. And one will remember once again the meditation deity and the instructions that were taught by the Guru. Having relied upon these instructions, one will remember that the sounds, the lights, and the rays are only self-manifestations. Consequently, one will remember once again the Natural State which is the King who is one's own Knowing Awareness.

Having created the secondary causes by way of the three manifestations (which are the sounds, the lights, and the rays), the King who is Awareness sees in them his own face. And delusions, which represent ignorance or the lack of awareness, are awakened and purified into their own original condition (which is emptiness). And the King who is Awareness remains in his own original condition. Whereupon the King who is Awareness vanquishes all these visions. And since he obtains independence with respect to appearances (that is, the visions seen in the Bardo), thereupon the Trikaya arise as self-manifestations which thereafter accomplish the benefit of living beings.

B Liberation in the Next Life

As for the individual of inferior spiritual capacity: Because of the power of little habitual practice (during one's previous lifetime), one does not come to recognize the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality and consequently the Bardo of Existence arises (before consciousness). But because of the power of one's white (or good) deeds (from one's past lives), the sounds, the lights, and the rays having arisen as pure visions, one will come to obtain a (new) body in a happy destiny of rebirth. And the manifesting of his personal karma having been prolonged, he will obtain liberation (in one's next life).

As for those inferior individuals who did not experience the entering into the gateway of the instructions (during their lifetimes), they will not know that the sounds, the lights, and the rays (encountered in the Bardo) are, in fact, only self-manifestations, and they will grasp at things and their characteristics (thinking them to be objectively real). Having entered into attachment, anger, and confusion with respect to those (sounds, lights, and rays encountered into the Bardo), the various different manifestations of delusion arise (as visions seen in the Bardo) and the individual continues to wander lost in Samsara.

C. The Boundary between Liberation and Delusion

Similarly, as for the boundary between liberation and delusion, (it occurs when) one enters into the Bardo (immediately after the death of the psyche and before the onset of the visions in the intermediate state).

As for this teaching cycle, it is known as the Wheel of the Time of the Bardo.

D. The Functions of the Four Wheels

In the same way, by means of the Wheel of the Base that abides, one knows that the Trikaya are spontaneously perfected (from the very beginning) with respect to mind (that is, the Nature of Mind). By means of the Wheel of the Independent Origination due to either understanding or to delusion, there comes about a clear and definitive decision that both Samsara and Nirvana originate from mind (that is, the Nature of Mind). By means of the Wheel of the Channels that represent the essential points of the body, the very basis for delusion is severed at the root. And by means of the Wheel of the Time of the Bardo, one separates and distinguishes liberation and delusion (after death).

Extracted from The Mirror of the Mind of the Oral Transmission, "The Instructions for setting side by side the Four Wheels" is herein completed.

SARVA MANGALAM!

[Translated by Vajranatha, John Myrdhin Reynolds]

COMMENTARY TO THE TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT

The title of the text translated here is given in Tibetan as the rDzogs-pa chen-po zhang-zhung snyan rgyud las 'khor-lo bzhi sbrag bzhugs-so, here is contained "The Setting Side by Side of the Four Wheels" from the Oral Tradition of Zhang-zhung for the Great Perfection Teachings. The text opens with a Homage to the Masters of the Lineage (brgyud-pa'i bla-ma rnams la phyag 'tshal-lo). The Preface, which follows the Homage, commences with a quotation from the sNyan rgyud sems kyi me-long, "The Mirror of the Mind belonging to the Oral Transmission," to the effect that "If one does not know the instructions for setting side by side the Four Wheels, then the teacher who elucidates the mind-stream is only like a guest without any kin or attendants ('khor-lo bzhi sbrag gi gdams-pa ma shes na/ rgyud 'chad-pa'i ston-pa ni/ dpung gnyen med-pa'i mgron-po dang 'dra)."

There are four parts to this text, each being called a wheel or a cycle of teaching ('khor-lo). These wheels or cycles have nothing to do with the Indian Tantric system of Chakras located in the human body and employed in yoga praxis. In the text, these wheels are set side by side, much as one would do with the four wheels of a wagon or vehicle. The present text has also been studied by S. Karmay. [1]

These Four Wheels are as follows:

1. the Wheel of the Base that abides (gnas-pa gzhi'i 'khor-lo),
2. the Wheel of the Interdependent Origination due to either Understanding or to Delusion (rtogs 'khrul rten-'brel gyi 'khor-lo),
3. the Wheel of the Channels that represents the Essential Points of the Body (lus gnad rtsa'i 'khor-lo), and
4. the Wheel of the Time of the Bardo (bar-do dus kyi 'khor-lo).

I. The Wheel of the Base that Abides

The Preface goes on to declare that if one does not know this cycle of teaching concerning the Base that abides as the Natural State of the Nature of Mind, then one will not know and realize that Buddhahood, as the Trikaya of the Base, is already wholly present and perfected in the mind of the individual sentient being (sku-gsum sems la rdzogs tshul mi shes). And also at the Conclusion of the text, it states that if one does know this teaching, then one will know that the Trikaya is spontaneously perfected from the very beginning within the mind (de ltar gnas-pa'i 'khor-los/ sku-gsum sems la lhun gyis grub-par shes). Indeed, Buddhahood is primordially present at the core of the individual, but here this Buddha-nature is like the sun having its face covered by clouds. The Path represents the removal of these clouds which are the obscurations that have concealed what has been there all along. However, Buddhahood only becomes fully manifest with the realization of the Fruit, such as the face of the sun becoming visible when it is free of clouds. So, one must distinguish the Trikaya of the Base (gzhi'i sku-gsum), which represents this Primordial Buddhahood (ye snags-rgyas), from the Trikaya of the Path (lam gyi sku-gsum), which represents the Buddhahood that is progressively coming into manifestation (mngon sangs-rgyas) as the clouds which are the emotional and intellectual obscurations are cleared away, and from the Trikaya of the Fruit ('bras-bu'i sangs-rgyas), which represents the perfect Buddhahood (rdzogs sangs-rgyas) that is fully realized and not just potential.

This first wheel, or cycle of teaching, concerning the Base that abides as the original Natural State of the Nature of Mind, speaks of three mandalas, which are dimensions of existence and activity. A mandala (dkyil-'khor) is a structured space having a center (dkyil) and a periphery ('khor). These three mandalas pertaining to the Base are

A. the Mandala of the Dimension of the Dharmakaya (bon-sku dbyings kyi dkyil-'khor),
B. the Mandala of the Sambhogakaya (rdzogs-sku'i dkyil-'khor), and
C. the Mandala of the Nirmanakaya which may emenate anywhere (cir yang sprul-pa'i dkyil-'khor).

In relation to the first mandala, the text speaks of the earliest times within the three times, from time without beginning or end (nya lo snga dus gsum thog dang tha-ma med-pa'i dus). The earliest times (nya lo snga) actually means in illo tempore, in the time of the beginning, that is to say, before the temporal process or profane time began. It is the timeless moment before creation and the temporal sequence as we now know it comes into being. It was what was before creation and the Big Bang. [2] This is speaking from the cosmogonic perspective. But in individual psychogenic terms, this refers to the moment before the mind or the thought process came into existence once again following the

process of death. Actually, it is the mind, both its causal concepts and its sorting and sequencing processes ordering the chaos of sense data, that creates the experience of sequential time for the individual. But, in the true chaos of the beginning, all events are simultaneous. All that has ever occurred and all that will ever occur are primordially present in that timeless instant which is the Natural State. This is the moment of the Base, the Eternal Now.

And this is also the moment of pure potentiality for the emergence of all possible modes of existence, whether of the sacred order of Nirvana or of the profane order of Samsara. [3] It is that precise moment when either an enlightened Buddha or an ignorant and deluded sentient being may emerge from that Base which is total primordial purity (ka-dag chen-po'i gzhi). This is the time of the beginning, the moment of creation. This primeval moment of Shunyata or emptiness, which is feminine in its nature, pregnant with all possibilities, being the Great Mother, is mythopoeically represented by the darkness of the beginning and the waters of the deep, the tehom of the Biblical account of Genesis. It is symbolized in ancient creation myths by the great primordial ocean of chaos.

Moreover, in the Dzogchen tradition, this primordial openness, spaciousness, and emptiness is still feminine in nature. This dimension for the potential emergence of all possible universes and all forms of existence belonging to Nirvana and Samsara is said to be like the vast open sky (nam-mkha' ltar). This does not mean that this dimension is literally the blue sky we see above our heads with our eyes, for that is only the atmosphere of our planet earth. Nor is it simply the dark reaches of interstellar space, filled with stars and galaxies, as seen with our modern telescopes. The Dzogchen texts only assert that this primordial dimension is like the sky, and as the Lamas point out, the sky or atmosphere is not conscious. No, this dimension is something far more fundamental, a great space or primordial dimension (dbyings) that equally embraces physical extension and awareness or mind. It is totally all-pervasive and all-encompassing (khyab bdal chen-po). And like the sky itself, it is totally impartial. It is equally the source of the sacred and the profane, of order and chaos, of light and darkness, of Nirvana and Samsara, of good and evil, of salvation and damnation, of God and the Devil. [4] Nonetheless, the sky or space, as the matrix of all phenomena, is in itself, a heirophany or revelation of the power of the sacred. [5]

Then, from within this vast expanse of the Kunzhi, the primordial dimension that is like the sky or space, there arises of itself, freely and spontaneously, an intrinsic Awareness or Rigpa; it represents a clear luminosity that is devoid of discursive thoughts, being like the orb of the sun appearing bright and naked in the clear open sky (de la rig-pa ni kun-gzhi'i klong nas rang shar te/ gsal la rtog-pa med-par nyi-ma'i snying-po lta-bur gnas-so). This represents the first moment of creation, the Fiat Lux. [6]

In the mythologies of ancient peoples, the myths of creation speak of the dark waters of the primeval sea that covered everything before the time of creation. All forms lay dissolved in these primeval waters of the deep, like crystals held in solution, so that all things existed there in all their future potentiality. All possible forms will eventually emerge out of these primordial waters. This chaos that preceded creation, or the rational ordering of existence, is not a mere nothingness, but the primal substance or arche out of which all things emerge. Here this imagery speaks in mythpoeic and cosmogonic terms, such as the dark waters of the primeval ocean or the vast empty space of primordial chaos. But in Buddhist philosophical terms, this primeval sea or watery chaos is actually Shunyata, or the state of emptiness, the vast expanse of space that is not a substance, but pure potentiality, being as yet without distinctions or individualized existents. Shunyata is the arche or the original source of all things and it is into this state of Shunyata that all things will dissolve and become enfolded once again..

In psychogenic terms which pertain to the individual sentient being, this imagery of the myth of creation refers precisely to the black-out or state of emptiness experienced immediately following the moment of true psychic death at the conclusion of the Chikhai Bardo. This is the time before the time that is known to us sequentially, the time before creation, before the first light of daybreak at the dawning of the Clear Light of Reality with onset of the Bardo experience. Just as cosmology in the ancient mythologies reflects the very structure of the psyche, so the cosmogonies and myths of creation reflect the genesis of the psyche itself in the Bardo. However, this Shunyata or state of emptiness, mythologically represented by the dark feminine waters of the deep, and the arising of Awareness (Rigpa), mythologically represented as the first light of dawn and the rebirth of

the sun, are not actual historical events occurring one after another in succession as night and day do. The matter is only explained in this way for purposes of human discourse. Rather, Kunzhi and Rigpa have been primordially present because they have been without any duality from the very beginning (ye nas gnyis su med-pa). Indeed, they represent the primordial non-duality of Dimension (or extension) and Gnosis (or awareness) (dbyings dang te-shes). They have been inseparable from the very beginning (ye nas dbyer-med) and this inseparability is known as the Mandala of the Dimension of the Dharmakaya. [7]

And because of that primordial inseparability of Kunzhi and Rigpa, the three great or total manifestations (snang-ba chen-po gsum), which are the vibrations or sounds, the lights, and the rays (sgra 'od zer gsum), come to arise in a spontaneously perfected and effortless manner (rtol-ba med-par lhun gyis grub-pa). These vibratory and photic phenomena are not created by some God or agent external to themselves, nor from any cause antecedent to their manifestation. They manifest simply and spontaneously as the natural expression of this primordial inseparability, the inseparability of space and awareness. A total primordial purity (ka-dag chen-po) is not only characteristic of the Base, but it is equally characterized by a spontaneous self-perfection (lhun-grub) that brings forth manifestations ceaselessly and unobstructedly (ma 'gags-pa).

The lights that spontaneously manifest are compared to sunlight being refracted while passing through a clear quartz crystal, thereby casting rainbow structures in space ('od ni gzha' khyim gyi tshul du gnas). These holographic structures are called rainbow palaces (gzha' khyim). And the lights that appear are the rainbow lights of the five primary colors. They are the inherent lights (rang 'od) of the crystal which is the Base; they are self-manifestations (rang-snang) because they are not due to any causes external to themselves and they represent the free spontaneous manifestations of the Nature of Mind (sems kyi snang-ba). The vibrations or sounds that occur in the vastness of space, like the sounds of distant thunder, represent the inherent sounds of emptiness which is the Ultimate Reality (sgra ni bon-nyid stong-pa'i rang-sgra). And the rays, that is, light having direction and shape, come to form the bindus or tiny spheres of rainbow light (thig-le) that contain within themselves infinities of images of celestial palaces and divine forms, such as those of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and they come to abide in the manner of a luminous network of sun beams (zer dang thig-le gzhal-yas gur-khang dang sku dang gzugs-brnyan rnams ni/ nyi zer drwa-ba'i tshul du gnas-so). These manifestations and events occur both with the onset of the Bardo process and during the course of practice in the dark retreat. All perceptions of an external world rest on the effulgent manifestation of these three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays. They are the building blocks of all phenomenal existence, and yet they do not represent any solid substance or inherent existence. They are only fleeting ephemeral events. They are projections of light and energy and they come to comprise the total holographic model of reality we call the external world. Yet there is nothing substantial or objective to be found there, only empty space and light. Moreover, this primordial Act of Creation, the first light of existence, is repeated each time the individual sentient being awakens from the stupor of death. This is also the case when one falls asleep at night before the onset of the dream state. And this also applies to the practice of vision and the dark retreat, both of which serve as preparation for death and the Bardo experience. [8]

Having arisen of themselves (rang shar) and manifested in their spontaneous perfection, these three great manifestations become linked with the presence of Rigpa or intrinsic Awareness which has been there from the very beginning, inseparable with the Kunzhi. And at this juncture, Rigpa is called the King who is one's own Knowing Awareness (rang shes rig gi rgyal-po zung du 'brel-bas). Rigpa is called the King (rgyal-po), not because he is a king or sovereign in the sense of the God of monotheism, but because Rigpa is what is most important in this whole process of coming into manifestation. It is an individual self-awareness (rang-rig) that knows (shes) these three manifestations of sounds, lights, and rays which are actually projections of its own inherent energy (rig-pa'i rang rtsal) into the dimension of great space that is the Kunzhi. And by way of this process, the linking up or uniting (zung du 'brel-ba) of these three total manifestations with Rigpa or Awareness, everything possible within Samsara and Nirvana originate and come into being ceaselessly and without respite in their spontaneous self-perfection ('khor 'das thams-cad 'byung rung ma 'gags-par lhun gyis grub). This is known as the Mandala of the Sambhogakaya (rdzogs-sku'i dkyil-'khor). This is the archetypal dimension of pure light; as yet there is no taint of materiality or corruption about it.

By way of the non-duality of Dimension and Gnosis, the three total manifestations arise unceasingly (dbyings dang ye-shes gnyis su med-papa las/ snang-ba chen-po gsum ma 'gags-par shar). These three manifestations are called great or total (chen-po) because they arise spontaneously at the beginning, before anything else, and come to fill all of the empty dimensions of space, which are empty in the sense of being open to all potentialities. The self-manifestations of these vibrations, lights, and rays in empty space then come to be perceived as magical apparitions or holograms (cho-'phrul) which, in an uncertain manner (nges-med), in terms of probabilities rather than necessity, may emanate and arise anywhere ('khor 'das kyi cho-'phrul cir yang 'char-ba). Depending on whether one understands (rtogs-pa), that is, whether one recognizes these phenomena to be projections and manifestations of the Nature of Mind, or does not understand (ma rtogs-pa), thinking that they are separate from oneself and have an objective reality, they become the secondary conditions for the manifestation of either Nirvana or Samsara. The crucial factor in this case is the presence or absence of understanding. It is this knowledge (gnosis) or understanding that liberates from bondage to karma and cyclical existence, so that the individual awareness may ascend into the sacred archetypal order of Nirvana. But lacking this knowledge and failing to understand and to recognize the real nature of the display of lights that spontaneously appear in empty space, one descends once more and falls again under the power of the kleshas or emotional defilements and re-enters the worldly and profane order of Samsara with its various destinies of rebirth.

These holographic phenomena or magical apparitions (cho-'phrul) constitute the Mandalas of the Nirmanakaya that may manifest anywhere in space and throughout the three times. These visions of structured space called mandalas may either be Nirvanic, sacred, and pure, or they may be Samsaric, profane, and impure, depending on whether the individual understands or does not understand. Only metaphorically do the texts speak of ascent or descent, or of purity above and impurity below. The heavens are above and the hells are below, but it is not mythology or cosmic geography that determines the matter. These are only symbols and are depicted graphically in the Tibetan Wheel of Life diagram (srid-pa'i 'khor-lo). [9] Rather, the question is something gnostic: the presence or absence of understanding which is gnosis. And this understanding is not something purely intellectual or epistemological. It is not a knowing about something, a mere knowledge by acquaintance, but it is a matter of being. Knowledge and being are inseparably linked as understanding. One is what one knows and one knows what one is. This is gnosis and the understanding is ontological. To know Buddhahood or Nirvana is to be a Buddha. To know Samsara is to be an ordinary sentient being. This awareness is not conceptual because it is only revealed when the conceptual obscurations that block and restrict understanding are purified. Only through this process of purification, which is the Path, can one be relieved of the heavy burden of karma and habitual patterns of thought that obscure and distort one's vision.

This explanation of the three Mandalas demonstrates that, in relation to the King who is one's own Knowing Awareness, the Trikaya, which is the Buddhahood of the Base, is perfected and present from the very beginning (rang shes rig-pa'i rgyal-po la sku-gsum ye nas rdzogs-pa). That is to say, speaking cosmogonically, the Trikaya, which is the Clear Light, spontaneously manifests at the moment of creation, and speaking in terms of the psychogenesis of the individual, the Clear Light manifests at the Boundary (so-mtshams) between physical and psychic death, on the one hand, and the onset of the Bardo or the after-death experience, on the other hand. It is precisely at this moment that the individual has the maximum opportunity to recognize this Clear Light of Reality (bon-nyid 'od-gsal ngo-shes-pa) and thus realize Buddhahood. Failing that recognition, one experiences downfall and comes to re-enter Samsara.

II. The Wheel of Interdependent Origination

Again the Preface asserts that if one does not know this cycle of teaching concerning the evolution or interdependent origination of Nirvana, which is due to understanding, or the evolution of Samsara, which is due to delusion (rtogs 'khrul rten-'brel gyi 'khor-lo), then one will not know and recognize the common source for both Samsara and Nirvana ('khor 'das gnyis kyi byung khungs mi shes). This common source (byung khungs), which is implicit, is the Base or the Kunzhi referred to above. It is out of this Base, which may be compared to the great primeval ocean of chaos, that all the possible (byung rung)

manifestations of the sacred order of Nirvana and the profane order of Samsara spontaneously and incessantly arise. Indeed, it is like the great cauldron, belonging to the Great Goddess in Celtic myth, containing the boiling waters of life from which all living things emerge and that never becomes exhausted. But it is the dawning of the primordial clear light of Rigpa that brings these elementary phenomena of the sounds, the lights, and the rays into manifestationout of the vast empty space of the Kunzhi.

This primordial event, the first dawn, occurs at the Boundary or Border (so-mtshams) between what was before creation and the first moments of creation itself. In terms of the psychogenesis of the individual sentient being, this is the boundary between the black-out following the moments of physical and psychical death, and the first stirring of awareness that will generate the Bardo experience. This, as was said, is the moment of infinite potential, when the two pathways lie open before the individual, the moment when liberation becomes optimally possible. Understanding leads to liberation and to the pathway to Nirvana, whereas lack of understanding and the consequent onset of delusion leads to downfall and being caught up once more in the labyrinth of Samsara. The two doors are uniquely open at this time. There are two pathways and two goals but a single base and source.

And the Conclusion to the text states that, if one does know this teaching cycle, one will then come to a clear and definitive decision that both Samsara and Nirvana originate from mind (rtogs 'khrul rten-'brel gyi 'khor-los/ 'khor 'das sems las byung-bar dmar thag-chod). Here again, mind (sems) means not the thought process (rnam-rtog gi blo), but the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid), which is the Natural State (gnas-lugs) and the Primordial Base (ye gzhi) that alone abides.

A. The Evolution of Nirvana

In the usual usage of the term, Tendrel (rten-'brel, Skt. pratitya-samutpada) refers to a specific configuration of events brought about by a plurality of causes and conditions. But here the reference is to the whole elaborate process of evolution of Nirvana on the one hand and Samsara on the other hand. In terms of this, the contributory conditions are the spontaneous manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays in empty space. This empty space of pure potentiality provides the surface or screen for the projection of a phantasmagoria of photic and vibratory phenomena, a chaos of colored lights and sounds, which is then spontaneously organized and put into order and perceived in accordance with the principle of understanding or the principle of delusion. Thus, the two causes at work here are understanding and delusion, which give rise to Nirvana or Samsara respectively. Because of the presence of Rigpa in this display of light, it is possible for either the phenomena of Nirvana or the phenomena of Samsara to come forth unceasingly and in all their spontaneous self-perfection (rang shes rig gi rgyal-po la 'khor 'das byung run ma 'gags-par lhun gyis grub-pa). These three total manifestations are present and come to fill all of the dimension of space, but they are neutral in themselves, neither good nor evil. How they are perceived and understood, how order and meaning is brought out of this chaotic display in empty space, depends on the presence of understanding or gnosis or its absence. Lacking understanding, and failing to recognize the nature of these primordial clear lights, the individual gets caught up in delusion ('khrul-pa), which is the active process of grasping at the reality, substantiality, solidity, and objectivity of what one sees projected into empty space. It is not the seeing of this chaotic display of lights that is in error, but the grasping at the reality (bdag-'dzin) of what ever order of being is imposed on this display.

From understanding as its cause there arises the sacred order of Nirvana and from a lack of understanding as its cause there arises the profane order of Samsara (rtogs-pas mya-ngan las 'das-par shar/ rtogs-pas 'khor-bar shar-ro). This begins the Tendrel or process of evolution or interdependent origination. When discussing the question abstractly or in general, it is said in the texts that both Samsara and Nirvana arise from the same single Base. But in terms of personal experience, the single individual at the present moment will experience either Samsara or Nirvana and not both. That is to say, the individual is either an ordinary deluded sentient being or an enlightened Buddha. However, some texts will distinguish a third category, that of the Yogin, or the practitioner on the path, who has realized certain clairvoyant powers and a certain degree of pure vision, which might be thought of as catching a few brief glimpses of Nirvana.

First the text considers the process for the arising of Nirvana (mya-ngan las 'das-pa'i shar tshul). Just after awakening from the black-out that follows the moment of psychic

death, there arise into perception at this time the three visible objects that are the sounds, the lights, and the rays (snang-ba'i yul gsum mngon du shar-ba'i tshe). Thereupon the mental consciousness, or Manovijnana, comes into operation and it, because of the presence of understanding, comes to recognize these vibratory and photic phenomena as self-manifestations (yid kyi rnam-par shes-pas rang-snang du ngo lhag gis shes), that is to say, it recognizes them as self-created projections of mind. With the display of these three serving as the secondary conditions (rkyen), Rigpa or intrinsic Awareness comes to recognize itself in them (rig-pa'i rgyal-po rang ngo-shes). Recognizing them to be mere projections, one does not grasp at their reality or objectivity and thus the text says that the King who is Rigpa comes to vanquish these appearances and gain dominion and power over all the visions that arise, thereby attaining independence or self-rule (rang dbang).

Then, in terms of the development and evolution of these visions of Nirvana, which is the sacred order of being, the text speaks of the various pentadic aspects of the unfolding of pure vision. These are sixteen in number, following upon the first manifestation of the five pure lights. Five is the cosmological number; the cosmos is organized in terms of fives and evolution proceeds also in terms of fives because all growth is from the center outward into the four directions. The aspects of the arising into power of the emanations of Nirvana (mya-ngan las-pa'i rnam-sprul shugs la shar-ro) are then elucidated in the text:

0. the five lights that manifest visibly (snang-ba'i 'od lnga),
1. the five dimensions of the elements ('byung-ba'i dbyings lnga),
2. the five vast expanses of the Baga or vagina (ba-ga'i klong lnga),
3. the five bases that give support (rten-pa'i gzhi lnga),
4. the five limbs that are great gestures (phyag-rgya chen-po'i yan-lag lnga),
5. the six treasuries from which originate everything (kun 'byung gi mdzod lnga),
6. the five sense faculties that are unpolluted (zag ma med-pa'i dbang-po lnga),
7. the five sense consciousnesses that are unobscured (sgrib-pa med-pa'i dbang shes lnga),
8. the five sense objects that are completely pure (rnam-par dag-pa'i yul lnga),
9. the five Deities that are realized (grub-pa'i lha lnga),
10. the five Bodies that abide (gnas-pa'i sku lnga])
11. the five Families that arise (shar-ba'i rigs lnga),
12. the five powers that are without defect (nyams dang med-pa'i stobs lnga),
13. the five gnoses that are luminously clear (gsal-ba'i ye-shes lnga),
14. the five fruits that are unsurpassed (bla na med-pa'i 'bras-bu lnga),
15. the five Mandalas of the Great Perfection (rdzogs-pa chen-po'i dkyil-'khor lnga), and
16. the five realms that arise perceptibly (mngon su shar-ba'i zhing-khams lnga).

The five pure clear lights give rise to the five aspects of enlightened awareness, and then to the five pure elements that are Gnostic or spiritual, rather than material, in nature. Then from the vast expanse of the archetypal feminine, here called the Baga or "the Vagina," arise the five Mother Goddesses of the subtle spiritual elements. Here, the term "elements" refers not to a substance or something material, but to the various modes in which energy may manifest itself, both at the subtle and at the gross level. Moreover, the five pure lights give rise to the five subtle internal organs and to the five limbs of the subtle body, as well as to mind and the five sense faculties, to the five sense consciousnesses, and to the five sense objects. Then the five Deities, who are the five Dhyani Buddhas, as well as the five Buddha Families, arise, as normally described in the Tibetan Books of the Dead. [10] These may be tabulated as follows:

Pure Light: White Light ('od dkar-po), Green Light ('od ljang-khu), Red Light ('od dkar-po), Blue Light ('od sngon-po), Yellow Light ('od ser-po);
Direction: Center (dbus), North (byang), West (nub), South (lho), East (shar);
Buddha Family: Tathagata Family (de-bzhin rigs), Karma Family (las kyi rigs), Padma Family (padma rigs), Ratna Family (rin-chen rigs), Swastika Family (g.yung drung rigs);
Dhyani Buddha: gShen-lha, Gar-gsas, gNam-gsas, rGod-gsas, gSas-rje;
Aspect: Mind (thugs), Quality (yon-tan), Speech (gsung), Activity (phrin-las), Body (sku);
Wisdom or Gnosis: gnosis of emptiness (stong-nyid ye-shes), gnosis of sameness (mnyam-nyid ye-shes), discriminating gnosis (sor-rtogs ye-shes), activity gnosis (bya-nan ye-shes), mirror-like gnosis (me-long ye-shes);
Pure Realm: Lhun-grub zhing-khams, rNam-dag zhing-khams, bDe-ba-can zhing-khams, dBang-bkod zhing-khams, mNgon-dga' zing-khams;
Pure Element: ether or space (nam-mkha'), air (rlung), fire (me), water (chu), earth (sa)

The section concludes with the assertion that Kuntu Zangpo is the cause or reason for the existence of primordial Buddhahood (de ni kun tu bzang-po ye sangs-rgyas-pa'i gtan-tshigs-so), because from the very beginning He has understood and, therefore, He has never been mixed up in Samsara. [11]

B. The Evolution of Samsara

Secondly, the text considers the process for the arising of Samsara, the visions of cyclical existence, for the individual who does not understand (ma rtogs 'khor-bar shar tshul). Again, following the moment of psychic death when the individual awakens from the total darkness of unconsciousness, when the first subtle vibrations of Awareness arise perceptibly as the three visible objects which are the sounds, the lights, and the rays (snang-ba'i yul gsum mngon du shar-ba'i tshe), and failing to recognize their nature as self-manifested projections of mind, thereupon one's knowing awareness (shes rig) becomes afflicted with thoughts and memories and thereby falls into confusion regarding these objects (blo dran rig shes-pas yul la rmongs te). Not recognizing them from the very beginning to be self-manifestations, one grasps at their distinguishing characteristics as being real and objective (rang-snang du ma shes dngos-po mtshan-mar bzung). This network or field of multicolored lights provides the screen on to which the individual may project one's own delusions. These delusory appearances, which are merely holographic projections, come to obscure from one's view the Bodhichitta or Nature of Mind itself ('khrul-pa'i snang-ba shar te byang-chub sems la sgrib). Due to this incessantly busy activity of memories, reasonings, and thoughts, the individual does not come to recognize one's own inherent Awareness for what it really is (dran rig blo yis rang-rig ngo ma shes). And because of the power of this ignorance or lack of awareness, a dualistic consciousness comes to move out from its own original place to its object (ma rig dbang gis shes-pa yul la 'gyus). Thus, one no longer lives in the condition of the mirror, but in that of the reflections. A divided and fractured awareness no longer remains in its proper and original condition, which is the Natural State, but pursues and chases after these phantom appearances (rang sa ma zin snang-ba'i rjes su 'breng), thereby loosing its independence and intrinsic freedom (rang-dbang) and falls under the dominion of the archontic powers as the bound slave of its own illusions. [12] Thus, the interdependent origination and evolution of Samsara arises ('khor-ba'i rten-'brel shar).

As was the case with the evolution of the visions of Nirvana, the text outlines the evolution of the visions of Samsara as follows:

0. the five lights that manifest visibly (snang-ba'i 'od lnga),
1. the five causes of the elements in the external world (snod kyi 'byung-ba rgyu lnga),
2. the five nectars of the elements that are internal (nang gi 'byung-ba'i bcud lnga),
3. the five internal organs that give support (rten-pa'i don lnga),
4. the five limbs that arise as skillful actions (rtsal du shar-ba'i yan-lag lnga),
5. the five internal containers that accumulate (sog-pa'i snod lnga),
6. the five doors of the senses (dbang-po'i sgo lnga),
7. the five consciousnesses that discrimate among things (gcod-pa'i shes-pa lnga),
8. the five objects that are spheres of activity for the senses (spyod-pa'i yul lnga),
9. the five poisons that represent causes (rgyu dug lnga),
10. the five conducts from secondary causes of Samsara (rkyen las spyod lnga),
11.the five skandhas that are fruitional ('bras-bu phung-po lnga),
12. the five diseases from the humors ('du-ba'i nad lnga),
13. the five doorways to birth (skye-ba'i sgo lnga),
14. the five pathways to transmigration (rgyud-pa'i lam lnga),
15. the five fruits that are ripened (smin-pa'i 'bras-bu lnga), and
16. the five realms that arise visibly (mngon du shar-ba'i zhing-khams lnga).

These same five primordial lights, which, as in the case of Nirvanic vision, had been perceived in all their original and intrinsic purity, now come to be perceived as five dull lights which manifest visibly and all-prevailingly in empty space. When these five lights become united and linked with Rigpa or Awareness, their energies give rise to the five impure external elements, the five impure internal elements, the five internal organs of the body, and so on. These are elaborated in the text and may be tabulated as follows:

<u>The Five Lights</u> ('od lnga): white light ('od dkar-po), green light ('od ljang-khu), red light, ('od dmar-po), blue light ('od sngon-po), yellow light ('od ser-po);

<u>The Five Elements</u> ('byung-ba lnga): space (nam-mkha'), air (rlung), fire (me), water (chu), earth (sa);

The Five Internal Elements (khams lnga): consciousness (rnam-shes), breath (dbugs), heat (drod), blood (khrag), flesh (sha);
The Five Internal Organs (don lnga): heart (snying-po) lungs (glo-ba), liver (mchin-pa), kidneys (mkhal-ma), spleen (tsher-pa);
The Five Limbs (yan-lag lnga): head, right leg, right arm, left leg, left arm;
The Five Vessels (snod lnga): testicles (bsam-bse'u), large intestines (rgyu-long), gall bladder (mkhris-pa), urinary bladder (lgang-ba), stomach (pho-ba);
The Five Sense Organs (dbang-po lnga): eye (mig), nose (sna), tongue (lce), ear (rna-ba), body (lus);
The Five Sense Consciousnesses (rnam-shes lnga): eye-consciousness (mig gi rnam-shes), nose-consciousness (sna'i rnam-shes), tongue-consciousness (lce'i rnam-shes), ear-consciousness (rna-ba'i rnam-shes), body-consciousness (lus kyi rnam-shes);
The Five Sense Objects (yul lnga): forms (gzugs), smells (dri), tastes (ro), sounds (sgra), touches (reg);
The Five Negative Emotions (nyon-mongs lnga): anger (zhe-sdang), pride (nga-rgyal), envy (phrag-dog), greed ('dod-chags), confusion (gti-mug);
The Five Skandhas (phung-po lnga): consciousness (rnam-par shes-pa'i phung-po), impulses ('du-byed gyi phung-po), perceptions ('du-shes kyi phung-po), feelings (tshor-ba'i phung-po), form (gzugs kyi phung-po);
The Five Diseases: four kinds of humor disease ('du-ba rnam bzhi), wind disease (rlung nad), bile disease (mkhris nad), phlegm disease (bad-kan nad), combinations ('dus-pa'i nad)
The Five Kinds of Birth: four kinds of birth (skye-ba rnam bzhi), apparitional birth (rdzus skyes), heat birth (drod-skyes), egg birth (sgong-skyes), womb birth (mngal skyes)
The Five Destinies: hell rebirth (dmyal-ba), Deva-Asura rebirth (lha dang lha-min), human rebirth (mi), Preta rebirth (yid-btags), animal rebirth (byol-song).

That unfolding of delusion is the reason for the wandering in Samsara by the sentient beings belonging to the three worlds (de ni khams gsum sems-can 'khor-bar 'khyams-pa'i gtan-tshigs-so). These three worlds (khams gsum) are the Desire World ('dod khams), the Form World (gzugs khams), and the Formless World (gzugs-med khams) and comprise the totality of Samsara. Sentient beings who are dominated by their sensual desires, whether possessing gross physical bodies like humans and animals, or subtle ethereal bodies like the Devas (the gods and angels), the Asuras (the spirits and demons), the Pretas (the ghosts), and the denizens of the hell realms, all belong to the Desire World. The higher gods, the Elohim or Brahmas, inhabit the purely mental planes of the Form World and the Formless World corresponds to cosmic consciousness and the higher mystical states of consciousness. [13] However, all of these higher states of mystical consciousness and conditions of Godhood, no matter how exalted and long lasting, represent conditioned states and therefore belong to the order of Samsara and cyclical existence. Rebirth on any of these planes of existence, all of which are enfolded within the total dimension of existence, do not represent Nirvana or liberation from the cyclical existence from Samsara. Even though an individual, because of one's accumulation of good karma over many lifetimes, may attain the salvation of rebirth in heaven among the Devas or angels, this salvation is neither final nor ultimate. When the store of positive karma of that individual is exhausted, residual negative karma rising into consciousness will lead to rebirth once more in the lower realms. Thus, the pattern repeats itself; old habits of thought remain and cyclical existence continues to unfold itself relentlessly. Within Samsara there is no safe refuge from that fate. It is only by coming to recognize oneself as the King who is intrinsic Awareness (rig-pa'i rgyal-po rang ngo-shes na), that one can come to liberate oneself from the dominion of delusion and transcend even the dichotomies of dualistic thinking concerning Samsara and Nirvana.

At the beginning of the process of the evolution of the visions, either of Nirvana or of Samsara, due to the presence of Rigpa in the dimension of the Kunzhi, the inherent light of emptiness comes to shine in the five primary colors. Each of these clear and pure lights emanates sixteen kinds of manifestations of the enlightened state. They are the emanations of Nirvana (mya-ngan las 'das-pa'i rnam-sprul), being eighty in all [16 x 5=80]. However, when the lack of understanding and delusions become predominant, the five lights become dull and impure in their quality and each light generates sixteen kinds of delusory impure vision ('khrul-snang) associated with the physical body and with the external physical universe, there being again eighty in all for this deluded state. Thus, the vision of one's

own body, as well as the world, instead of being clear and translucent and Nirvanic, comes to appear as solid and opaque and Samsaric. Thus, there comes into existence out of a single source, two apparently distinct orders of being, the sacred and the profane.

III. The Wheel of the Channels

Thirdly, there is the cycle of teaching concerning the subtle psychic channels that represent the essential points of the human body (lus gnad rtsa'i 'khor-lo). Following the moments of physical and psychical death when the primordial Base is exposed in its original nakedness, as discussed in the first wheel, and after the arising of the primordial clear lights that represent the first manifestations of awareness emerging out of the Base before the onset of the visions of the Bardo experience, as discussed in the second wheel, the embryo of the individual soon to be reborn begins to evolve and grow within the womb. First to evolve is the psychic nerve system or network of psychic channels wherein move the winds or psychic energies that represent the subtle vehicles for mind and thought.

According to the Preface of the text, if one does not know this teaching concerning the psychic channels, then one will not be able to cut off at the root the basis for delusions, which are the profane visions of Samsara, as well as infatuation with the skandha or the physical body (phung-po'i 'di'i gtu 'khrul-pa'i gzhi rtsa mi chod). Consciousness (rnam-shes) having fallen once again into transmigration and finding itself in a physical body, one becomes attached to it, even intoxicated with it, so that one forgets one's real nature and original homeland or condition. One is like a star fallen to earth and one comes to wander once again in exile among phantasms in the occidental darkness. But, on the other hand, according to the Conclusion to the text, if one does know this cycle of teaching concerning the essential points of the physical body, then the basis for delusions will surely be severed at the root (lus gnad rtsa'i 'khor-los 'khrul-pa'i gzhi rtsa chod).

At the time when the body and the mind coalesce due to the power of karma (las kyi dbang gis lus sems 'dus-pa'i dus) refers to the moment of conception and the ensuing growth of the embryo in the womb. In its development, the human body is assimilated to the traditional Indian model of cosmology on the principle that the microcosm, the human body, and the macrocosm, the external universe, structurally correspond in every way. And in mythological terms, traditional cosmology also provides a map of the structure of the human psyche. [14] Thus the physical body is assimilated to the cosmic mountain Meru (ri-rab) at the center of existence. The Tsita or physical heart is the immeasurable pavilion of jewels, the celestial palace of the gods atop the cosmic mountain. The four internal organs and vessels (don snod bzhi) are the sites for the four elements. The three principal channels (rtsa gsum) represent the tree of life (srog shing) and the central channel is the trunk of the wish-granting tree of the gods, the Kalpataru. The four chakras arrayed along the central channel are the four basal steps (bar rim) of the stupa, the cosmic mountain having the shape of a stupa. The lesser branch channels (rtsa lag rnams) are the branches of this wish-granting tree that grows at the center of existence in the gardens of paradise. The major and minor limbs of the body (yan-lag nying-lag) are the four great continents and the lesser continents that surround the central cosmic mountain. The external skin (phyi'i lpags-pa) of the body is the outer ring of iron mountains (lcags ri 'khor-yug) that surround the cosmos and demarcate its periphery and boundaries. The five sense organs are the sun, moon, stars, and planets. The five guts (nang khrol lnga) are the secret treasuries within the body of the Meru mountain for the storage of wealth of the gods. The flesh, heat, blood, and breath, the internal elements of the body, are the four seasons (sha khrag drod dbugs nam zla dus bzhi'i tshul). And even though the Kunzhi and the Rigpa have resided in the heart from the very beginning, that is, from the moment of conception, they come to pervade the entire body in general, without any exterior or interior (de ltar kun-gzhi dang rig-pa ye nas gnas-pa'i snying-po de/ lus la phyi nang med-par spyi-blugs su khyab).

During the course of embryonic development, due to the activity of the five lights and the energies of the five elements, the five internal organs come to serve as supports for the five elements within the body ('od lnga dang 'byung-ba lnga'i rtsal las/ don lnga la 'byung-ba lnga'i rten bcas), where they come to be concentrated. The five limbs are manifestations of the energies of the five elements. And the five guts (nang khrol lnga) serve to accumulate the essences or nutriants deriving from the five elements ('byung-ba lnga'i bcud bsags). These anatomical structures and physiological processes are given in detail in the texts of Tibetan medicine, wherein there is a large and detailed system of

correspondences based on the five elements. [15] The Bonpo tradition attributes the origin of this system of medicine to Tonpa Shenrab and his son, rather than to borrowings from India and China.

Even though Rigpa or Awareness comes to pervade the entire physical body, Self-Awareness itself resides in the center of the interior of the physical heart where it arises (de ltar rig-pa'i rgyal-po lus la spyi-blugs su khyab kyang/ tsi-ta'i dbus na rang-rig khong shar du gnas te). In most traditional systems of wisdom, the center of the human being is located in the heart, rather than in the brain in the head, where the modern scientific notion would locate the center of consciousness. [16] Even though the head is the location for the majority of the sense organs, the site for the residence of the King who is Rigpa is in the palace of the heart at the center of one's being. And within the center of the heart, there is a lotus blossom of eight petals that represent knots in the psychic channels and here also are found the pure radiant essences of the elements (rtsa mdud padma 'dab brgyad kyi dbus na/ 'byung-ba'i dangs-ma lnga gnas te), as described in the text. Furthermore, within the space inside the interior of the physical heart, the Kunzhi abides like the open sky free of clouds, whereas Rigpa resides there like the sun that is free of darkness (kun-gzhi ni sprin dang bral-ba'i nam-mkha' lta-bur gnas/ rig-pa smag dang bral-ba'i nyi-ma lta-bur gnas). And also, within this dimension, the manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays that represent the energies projected by Rigpa, are found like a butter lamp placed inside of a clay vase. Moreover, mental consciousness, the Manovijnana, arises there, in order to perceive these photic phenomena, like the process of the rays of light streaming forth from the sun (sgra 'od zer gsum ni bum-pa nang gi mar-me lta-bur gnas/ yid kyi rnam-par shes-pa ni nyi-ma 'od zer gyi tshul du shar-ro). This is the description of the interior light within the heart experienced by all mystics.

The text is providing a brief description of the mystical anatomy and physiology for the practice of vision or Thodgal, by means of which the practitioner comes to obtain liberation from the delusions of Samsara and realizes the Rupakaya or Form Body of Buddhahood, the Rainbow Body of Light. By way of the practice of contemplation or Tregchod, one comes to realize the Dharmakaya, but by way of the practice of vision, one comes to realize the Rupakaya, consisting of the Sambhogakaya and the Nirmanakaya. This practice of vision is dealt with in more detail in the second volume in this series.

Rigpa, that essence that has abided from the very beginning (ye nas gnas-pa'i snying-po de), which is uncaused and uncreated, resides in the middle of the physical heart (tsi-ta'i dbus na gnas-pa), which is the sacred vessel or grail. It serves as the Base (gzhi) for the practice of vision. Then the Path (lam) is the pathway of the translucent channel, also known as the smooth white nerve ('jam rtsa dkar-po) and the Kati channel, which goes from the heart, up around the casing of the brain, divides into two, and terminates at the pupils of the eyes. And then at the Gate (sgo), which are the two eyes, the internal light of Rigpa arises of itself and is projected into the space before the eyes (gzhi snying gi dkyil na gnas-pa la/ lam rtsa dbu-ma'i lam la zang-thal du byung nas/ sgo mig gi sgo-mo la rang shar su shar-ro). These then represent the Base, the Path, and the Gate. The empty space before they eyes serves as the screen onto which this interior light is projected and becomes visible. Thus this external space (phyi dbyings) where the interior light is projected and the internal space (nang dbyings) where the interior light of Rigpa resides become inseparably linked. Their integration is known as the secret space (gsang dbyings). [17]

By way of the instructions of the Guru or the Dzogchen master concerning the development of the physical body, both gross and subtle, one is directly introduced to what is Rigpa, which represents the essence itself of one's own being, and thereby the individual will come to a clear and definitive decision, without any further doubts whatsoever, regarding what is the basis of delusion (de ltar phung-po 'di'i thog tu/ bla-ma'i gdams-ngag gis/ ngo-bo nyid kyi rig-pa ngo-sprad la/ 'khrul-pa'i gzhi dmar thag-bcad). Here, the direct introduction by the master (ngo-sprad), his pointing out just what is Rigpa in one's immediate experience, is the means and the effect is the coming, on the part of the individual, to a clear and definitive decision (dmar thag-bcad). Such a "decision" (thag-bcad, literally, "cutting the rope") is not a choice based on convincing reasons or an intellectual act or a concept, all of which are secondary and relate to the workings of mind, but rather a discovery of something within one's immediate experience, something which has been there all along, so that no more doubt remains regarding it (the-tshoms med-pa). It is like digging in the earth of the floor of one's basement and discovering a treasure of

gold, which has lain concealed there from the very beginning. Previously one has only heard rumors of its existence, but now one has discovered it for oneself and has seen it for oneself, so no doubts regarding its existence or nature remain. [18] Moreover, being directly introduced by way of higher insight, the individual comes, in the same way, to see for oneself what are the secondary causes of delusion. And being directly introduced by the master to the non-duality of the Mother Clear Light, experienced after death, and the Son Clear Light, experienced in practice while one is yet alive, one will come to realize what is the essence of delusion. Thereby these three: the basis of delusion ('khrul-pa'i gzhi), the secondary causes of delusion ('khrul-pa'i rkyen), and the essence of delusion ('khrul-pa'i ngo-bo), come to be clearly understood by way of the direct introduction from the master and by way of the coming to a definitive decision or discovering them for oneself in one's personal experience.

The individual is now able to distinguish clearly between what is mind (sems) and what is the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid), which is the Bodhichitta, and so it is no longer possible for delusions to appear in the places of Samsara (byang-chub sems su dmar thag-chod-pas/ 'khor-ba'i gnas su 'khrul mi srid de). Thereby one severs delusions at the root and obtains liberation from Samsara without passing through the Bardo ('khrul-pa rtsad nas chod nas bar-do med du thar-pa thob-pa'o). How liberation may be realized without recourse to passage through the Bardo is described in the cycle of teaching presented below.

IV. The Wheel of the Time of the Bardo

The fourth cycle of teaching concerns the time of the onset of the Bardo experience after death (bar-do dus kyi 'khor-lo). The description in the preceding cycle of teaching concerning the mystical anatomy and physiology of the human body, which is the foundation for the practice of vision both in sunlight and in the dark retreat, pertains to the preparations made in advance during one's lifetime for death and the Bardo experience. Just as may be the case in practice, both with sunlight and with total darkness, following upon the onset of the Bardo after physical and psychical death, the archetypal sacred visions of the celestial hierarchies of Nirvana may be experienced in the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality (bon-nyid 'od-gsal gyi bar-do) and then the profane visions of the various destinies of rebirth in Samsara will be experienced. However, it is likely that the experience of the Clear Light after death will occur so rapidly, almost instantaneously and in a flash, that the individual will fail to recognize it unless one has done practice during one's life time, including both Dzogchen and Tantric practice. [19] So, not every deceased consciousness will experience this Bardo of the Clear Light. That is the reason why prior preparation and practice during the course of one's lifetime is so important. And failing to recognize the Clear Light of Reality, or even to catch a brief glimpse of it, the stream of consciousness flows relentlessly onward, driven on by its individual karma, into the experiences of the Bardo of Existence (rid-pa'i bar-do).

The experiences that the individual undergoes in this Bardo are determined by that individual's particular karma. [20] Even so, there exist practices, especially those dream yoga or lucid dreaming and the practices of Tantric transformation into a Yidam or meditation deity, that serve as preparation for the experiences of the Bardo of Existence. The latter practice would culminate in the creation and realization of a subtle body of mind (sems) and psychic energy or prana (srog) in the form of one's Yidam and this is technically known as the Illusion Body (sgyu-lus). However, realization of such a subtle body is not synonymous with enlightenment and liberation from Samsara, for, even though its form represents a pure vision of one's own being, there yet remain many layers of subtle spiritual obscurations that need to be purified. However, to accomplish this, one does not need to take on again a human existence. Furthermore, even though the visions seen in this Bardo represent impure karmic visions, nevertheless they can be transformed as the result of the previous practice of the Yidam.

Again, the Preface to the text states that if one does not know this teaching cycle concerning the advent of the Bardo, one will not, while in the Bardo, be able to separate and distinguish liberation, that is, recognizing the Clear Light, from the delusions or illusory karmic visions that arise after death (bar-do dus kyi 'khor-lo ma shes na/ grol 'khrul gyi shan mi phyed). These karmic visions represent both the residues of past existences and the precognitions of future existences. Moreover, time (dus) in the Bardo does not operate in the same mode as does the perception of time in the normal waking state, that is to say, time as rigidly sequential and chronometric. Rather, time in the Bardo

resembles time in the dream state where past and future come to be mixed up together. In many ways, the Bardo of Existence is like an extended dream state. For this reason, dream yoga and the practice of lucid dreaming can serve as preparation for death and the Bardo experience. In everyday life, the process of falling asleep may be equated with the Chikhai Bardo, the experience of dying, and the moment after falling asleep, but before the onset of the dream process, may be equated with the Bardo of the Clear Light because at that moment one may catch a glimpse of the Clear Light of the Nature of Mind. Finally, the dream state itself may be said to correspond to the Bardo of Existence, where one comes again under the sway of karmic visions and re-enters the holographic labyrinth.

Again, as the Conclusion to the text asserts, it is by means of this cycle of teaching concerning the time of the Bardo, that one is able to separate and distinguish liberation, by way of recognizing the Clear Light, from delusion, which is the falling once more under the sway and dominion of the dull lights of Samsara which lead back to the various destinies of rebirth within cyclical existence (bar-do dus kyi 'khor-los grol 'khrul gyi shan phyed-par 'gyur-ro). Whereas liberation represents ascent into the Clear Light of Reality brought about by gnosis or understanding, delusion represents a descent into the lower worlds of generation ruled over by the kleshas or passions, in this case brought about by a lack of gnosis or understanding. [21]

Practitioners of the spiritual path are divided into those of a superior capacity (dbang-po rab), those of an intermediate capacity (dbang-po 'bring-po), and those of an inferior capacity (dbang-po tha-ma). [22] In addition to these three, the individual possessing an exceedingly superior spiritual capacity (yang rab) may obtain liberation without the need to undergo death and the Bardo experience (dbang-po rab ni bar-do med-par thar-pa thob) because such an individual has attained liberation from Samsara in one's present lifetime. This process is known as Phowa Chenpo or the Great Transfer ('pho-ba chen-po), where one transforms directly into a Body of Light without the prior necessity of going through the death process.

However, the individual of a merely superior spiritual capacity (rab) can obtain liberation following physical death when one enters into and remains in the Natural State experienced in the Bardo of Emptiness, before the onset of the visions of the Bardo of the Clear Light. Furthermore, the individual of an intermediate spiritual capacity may obtain liberation after death in the Bardo of the Clear Light (dbang-po 'bring ni 'od-gsal kyi bar-do nas thar-pa 'thob ste). In terms of the level of Phowa practice, the consciousness of the superior individual is said to transfer directly into the Dharmakaya which is the Natural State, whereas the consciousness of the intermediate individual transfers into the Sambhogakaya which is the Clear Light. The Phowa practiced by the individual of inferior capacity is spoken of as being in the Nirmanakaya style since he transfers into the visualization of the Buddha or the Yidam.

During the process of dying, the consciousness of the individual experiences the progressive disintegration of the elements of the physical body. The various signs that appear, both externally and internally, marking the inevitable onset of the death process, are described in some detail in the different versions of the Tibetan Books of the Dead and this actual process of dissolution of the elements begins after the cessation of the external breath or breathing (phyi dbugs). At this time, the corpse of the deceased individual appears to the external observer as senseless and dead. There is no detectable breathing or brain activity, but this does not mean that the consciousness or Namshe does not continue to function and be aware of its surroundings. Although the consciousness remains linked to the body, now dead, it undergoes an out-of-the-body experience, moving about the vicinity of its former body and observing the efforts of medical practitioners to resuscitate him and the activities of grieving relatives. At first, the consciousness of the deceased may not even be aware that one is dead and be frustrated by the failure of one's efforts to attract the attention of those present. This is also not uncommonly experienced during near-death experiences. The sight of one's own corpse may come as a complete shock.

During this period, the individual inhabits a subtle mind-made body (yid-lus) which is an exact double or replica of one's dead physical body. There exist many accounts where this subtle body is experienced to separate from the sleeping individual and float above it, suspended in the air, although still connected to the physical body at such points as the medulla oblongata or the solar plexus by a slender psychic thread. Some psychics have been able to awaken in this subtle body and move about the vicinity at will, an experience related to the process of lucid dreaming. [23] Nevertheless, this subtle mind-made body

serves as the vehicle for the deceased consciousness for a certain period. It has all of its psychic senses fully operational, including the Manas or functional mind, so that it is aware of what transpires in its immediate environment. However, it is still linked to the circulation of psychic energy that continues for a time in the physical body of the deceased-- this circulation being known as the inner breath or breathing (nang dbugs). Not only does the consciousness of the deceased witness scenes that go on around him in the normal world, but one has various auditory and visual experiences as the elements of the physical body progressively disintegrate and dissolve back into space. These experiences are described in the Tibetan Books of the Dead literature. Thus, psychic life and the circulation of psychic energy continue for a time after the death of the physical body, traditionally said to last a least three days. For this reason, the Tibetans do not cremate the corpse immediately upon death, but only three days afterwards.

According to Tibetan folk beliefs, the Bardo lasts for a duration of forty-nine days for the deceased before that individual goes on to a rebirth. For this period there exists a system of puja offerings for the dead, including butter lamps, as well as tsampa or roasted barley flour, rice, flowers, figurines, and so on, which are burned in a fire. This is done in the belief that the deceased, being now like an ethereal Driza or smell-eating spirit (dri-za, Skt. Gandharva) can partake of the subtle essences of these burnt offerings contained in the smoke rising from the fire. Moreover, it is believed that the deceased will keep company with the living for a time, returning at meals times out of past habit and sitting down with the family, to partake of these offerings and food.

Since the deceased would be upset if he were not offered a share of food, a special ritual is performed by a Lama who is invited for the purpose. Generally these rituals and text readings are done during the requisite three days of vigil over the corpse of the deceased. Only thereafter is the body dispatched for cremation or sky burial. First the Lama does the Phowa practice, the transferring of consciousness, while sitting near the head of the corpse while reciting the liturgy and visualizing the Namshe of the deceased exiting the body. After kindling a sacrificial fire with sticks, the Lama reads various ritual texts from the Tibetan Book of the Dead cycle, does certain visualizations, and shows various picture cards. All the time, the consciousness of the deceased witnesses and is aware of these activities. Another person, acting as an assistant to the Lama, puts rice on the picture card and then this rice is put into the fire. When the rice burns, its smoke goes directly to the spirit of the dead in the vicinity and he comes to feel he has actually received that object. For example, the Lama may tell the spirit of the deceased that he needs a house while the assistant puts some rice on that house picture card and then pours the rice into the fire. Thus, the dead person receives the smoke and comes to feel he now has a house. In this way, there exists actual communication between the world of the living and the world of the dead. [24]

Then the Lama begins to read the instructions from the texts of the Tibetan Book of the Dead cycle known as the Bar-do thos-grol, or "Liberation through Hearing while in the Bardo." [25] The Lama instructs the deceased, saying, "Listen to me, O fortunate son or daughter! You have now died and you will see visions before you. Do not be frightened by them. They are merely self-manifestations of your own Nature of Mind. You will see glorious mandalas and radiant deities....." and so on. These instructions from the Bar-do thos-grol are heard by the deceased because at this time one inhabits a subtle mind-made body wherein the mind and all the psychic sense faculties are fully operational. During these first three days before the corpse is disposed of properly, the Lama performs the Phowa rite and gives the instructions concerning the Chikhai Bardo. After that time, on various occasions during the forty-nine day extended duration of the Bardo, he will make certain puja offerings and read aloud the instructions for the Bardo of the Clear Light and the Bardo of Existence while the deceased consciousness is experienced these visionary landscapes. Moreover, these same instructions are read aloud during the first three days of the funeral ceremonies in order to prepare the deceased for what lies ahead when one departs from the Bardo of Dying. Even in the subsequent Bardos, the deceased can hear the voice of the Lama, provided one thinks of and recalls the Lama and his instructions given previously. For this reason, the Lama, whether Buddhist or Bonpo, becomes an expert in funeral ceremonies and exorcising and dispatching onward to their next life the spirits of the dead. The Lama is pre-eminently a psychopomp, or guide to the souls of the dead traversing the perilous inner psychic landscapes of the Bardo.

This whole process of the dying of the psyche and the dissolving of the personality of the individual, as well as the prolonged process of the disintegration of the gross and subtle elements of the body, from the cessation of the outer breathing to the cessation of the inner breathing, or circulation of psychic energy that sustains the life of the subtle body, is known as the Chikhai Bardo ('chi-kha'i bar-do), "the intermediate state of dying." The actual death of the psyche, sometimes known as the second death, represents the culmination of this process. This is followed by three Bardos or intermediate states that span the duration between this actual psychic death and actual rebirth in the womb following upon conception. These are as follows:
1. the intermediate state of emptiness (stong-pa'i bar-do),
2. the intermediate state of the Clear Light of Reality (bon-nyid 'od-gsal kyi bar-do), and
3. the intermediate state of existence or becoming (srid-pa'i bar-do) which represents the actual process leading up to rebirth.

All three of these Bardos are experienced in one way or other by the individual. However, if one is not a practitioner of a spiritual tradition, the first and the second Bardo experiences will be exceedingly brief, especially the second. The experience of the Clear Light may be no more than a distant flash of lightning in the dark night of the void. This is the fleeting and insubstantial experience of the unregenerate individual who has not been initiated into the Mysteries. The whole point of the Ancient Mysteries, such as those at Eleusis, was to prepare the individual candidate for the experience of death and rebirth. [26] Then follows the Bardo of Existence with its inexhaustible multitude of karmic visions, elsewhere elaborately described in various traditions, such as in the Egyptian Book of the Dead. [27] Conventionally, this experience of the Bardo is said to last forty-nine days, that is, seven weeks, but these are only symbolic days. But as we have said before, time in the Bardo is not the same as the conventional chronometric time of the normal waking state of consciousness. It is more like the time in dreams. The duration that any particular individual spends in the Bardo and rebirth process, measured in terms of the outer world, varies according to the particular karma of that individual. For an individual, the Bardo may last for barely an instant before rebirth is taken up or it may extend for thousands of years.

The first Bardo listed above, the Bardo of the State of Emptiness, which in some versions of the Tibetan Books of the Dead is described as the culmination of the preceding Chikhai Bardo and therefore included within it, represents the moment of psychic death or reabsorption. It is a complete black-out of individual consciousness and dissolution of individuality. This is sometimes compared to the eclipse of the sun and the moon, where the solar female energies and the lunar male energies dissolve into empty space. The practice of Tummo (gtum-mo) or inner psychic heat, where the two polar energies within the body of the single individual, the feminine and the masculine, or the solar and the lunar, are integrated, also serves as a preparation for this experience. It brings about a realization of the gnosis of bliss and emptiness (bde stong ye-shes), which represents the culmination of the Tantric practice of transformation. [28] The eclipse of the solar and the lunar energies is also experienced in the process of dying. This moment of total eclipse or black-out follows upon the moment of the cessation of the inner breathing. It is an experience of total emptiness or void, but at the same time blissful. As said previously, according to the Dzogchen teachings, this emptiness is not merely a cold dark nothingness, as modern scientific materialism and nihilism would have it, but another mode of consciousness. Consciousness is not totally annihilated at death when the brain ceases functioning, like turning off the power switch on one's computer.

Although during the normal waking state, the electro-chemical activity of the nerve-net of the brain does serve as the physical support for mind and consciousness, its actual support is space itself. And so, consciousness persists even after the biocomputer of the brain has been shut down. It continues to subsist in the very fabric of space itself, where it is part of a far greater organism than its former physical body. It is enfolded back into the dimension of the great space of the Kunzhi. For this reason, Dzogchen possesses many meditation exercises to bring about in terms of individual practice the realization of this co-extensiveness of space and awareness. Our three-dimensional world of the waking state, our conventional reality, is only the surface of the great ocean of the Kunzhi, only one facet of space, which possesses its own deep structures in terms of multidimensionality. These other dimensions become accessible under conditions of certain altered states of consciousness. Like the dream state itself and out-of-the-body experiences, the Bardo

experience is one such alternative dimension. It is part of the total multidimensionality of Kuntu Zangpo (kun-bzang klong drug) which is the Primordial State of the individual (kun-bzang dgongs-pa). [29]

When the six consciousnesses of mind and the senses, as well as the internal psychic energies cease their activities, the psyche of the individual finally dies and enters the black-out condition of totally empty space. This is like drowning in the great ocean or like the dissolving a crystal of salt in a vessel of water. As the famous poem by Sir Edward Arnold, The Light of Asia, puts it, "..... the dew drop slips into the shining sea." But this is really not a final dissolution and ultimate loss of individuality. [30] Even though, at that moment, there only exists the water, the waters of primeval chaos, just as it was at the time of the beginning, yet there remains the possibility of once more precipitating and recrystalizing the salt which is now in solution. So, the individual mind-stream or consciousness, carried onward by the momentum of its karma, reconstitutes itself and re-emerges out of the great waters of universal space. Therefore, this death of the psyche is actually an open, limitless condition pregnant with all possibilities. It is not just an empty void, cold and dead, a mere nothingness, but a state of latency.

Within this openness to all possibilities, this pure potentiality which is Shunyata, there dawns the Clear Light of Reality (bon-nyid 'od-gsal) which is the inherent luminosity and clarity of the indestructible diamond-like Nature of Mind. This interior light that never fades, the inherent clear luminosity of the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid kyi rang gsal), is the inseparability from the very beginning of space and awareness, Kunzhi and Rigpa. There has been no time when they have not been inseparable. And this inseparability (dbyer-med) is not some event that occurs in history, for it preceded ontologically the advent of sequential time which is itselfthe creation of the thought process of the observer. Moreover, Awareness comes to recognize its own face in the first presence of this primordial Clear Light, having previously encountered it in one's past life, both in sleep and in vision practice, as the Son Clear Light, now one meets it in actuality and in its total fullness as the Mother Clear Light. This revelation of the primordial light in the pristine darkness of the adyton, the subterranean innermost sanctuary of the Bardo, thereupon unfolds into fractiles and a psychedelic concophany of brilliant colors, eventually unfolding into an infinity of universes of pure visions of Nirvana, as described in the text. [31] For the practitioner, this is the experience of the Bardo of the Clear Light and it is precisely at this moment, known as the Boundary between liberation and delusion (grol 'khrul gnyis kyi so-mtshams), between Nirvana due to understanding and Samsara due to not understanding, that the maximum opportunity to realize Buddhahood presents itself. It is the parting of the two ways.

Once consciousness has separated from the physical body and the brain as its material support, Rigpa or intrinsic Awareness now abides without any physical support whatsoever (dgos-pa'i lus dang bral nas rig-pa rten med du gnas). It remains suspended in the middle of space, its only support being space itself. At that moment, freed from all physical restraints and conditionings, it is now possible that anything could come into manifestation (de'i tshe 'di ltar snang-ba thams-cad). Rigpa is, at that moment, not located at a particular point in space, but it finds itself at the very center of existence, a point which is nowhere and yet everywhere. It is now at the center where creation began in the time of the beginning, the time of the first dawning of the Clear Light over the dark waters of chaos. Thus, the disembodied consciousness, now freely suspended in the pure potentiality of empty space, comes to experience the first dawn, the initial vibrations, lights, and rays that arise in the dark infinite void of space. This is the Fiat Lux, the precise moment of the new creation, as explained previously.

If the deceased individual has previously been a practitioner of Dzogchen and Tantra, that is, of recognition and transformation, one will readily come to recognize the nature of these clear lights as being self-manifestations of one's own Nature of Mind. Like the crystal and the rainbows of refracted light it casts, the mirror is the source for projecting the very images its reflects. The Nature of Mind is compared both to the crystal and to the mirror. The metaphor is not perfect because here the crystal and the mirror are here also the source of the light, the inherent light or inner light (nang 'od), for this light is not due to another and does not come from outside of them. The initial manifestations of light will arise as the pure realms of the five clear lights ('od lnga'i zhing-khams su 'char), as described in the Tibetan Books of the Dead. And from the rays there will arise magical apparitions or holograms in an uncertain manner (cho-'phrul nges-med). That is to say,

they are uncertain because they come into existence as probabilities, not as events predetermined according to some plan or as things brought about by antecedent causes. And the sounds or initial vibrations in the fabric of space arise as the inherent sounds or emptiness which is the Ultimate Reality (bon-nyid stong-pa'i rang sgra sgrag). These primal vibrations are the first manifestations of existence, yet all of these manifestations lack any inherent existence. They are sometimes called Nada or subtle sound.

In terms of the practice of the individual, these sounds arise discontinuously as the sounds of alternating breathing with inhalation and exhalation and as other spontaneously produced sounds in the body. They are pointed out by the Guru as examples in order to give a direct introduction to the inherent sounds (rang sgra) of space itself. And if the practitioner of Dzogchen has been previously prepared by way of the habitual practice of vision and the dark retreat, this primordial chaotic display of colored lights and fractiles will spontaneously constellate into the visions of divine forms and mandalas (sku dang dkyil-'khor). In general, these divine forms are known as the Peaceful and the Wrathful Deities (zhi khro lha tshogs). As indicated previously, these mandalas, having a center (dkyil) and a boundary ('khor), represent a structured pentadic sacred space, the archetype of eternity. These mandalas come to appear as bubbles or as tiny spheres of rainbow light (thig-le), which spontaneously link up in chains of Awareness (rig-pa'i lu-gu-rgyud), like long strands of DNA. The whole molecular cosmos becomes reconstituted and seated in each atom where Buddha figures are seen. Eventually these chains become networks that fill all of space, reminiscent of the bubble-like great wall of galaxies seen through the mightiest telescopes at the edge of the known universe. These are the visions of the beginning and when one looks far enough, one sees the reflection of one's own face.

And within all of these bindus or tiny spheres of rainbow light (thig-le) are seen the pure spiritual forms of the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas, the mandalas and the celestial palaces, the holy places and the great saints, and so on. These divine forms of enlightened beings are the pure visions of Nirvana. The text goes on to describe in what way this display occurs to the consciousness of the deceased practitioner of Dzogchen, whose previous practice of Thodgal represented a preparation for one's experience of the visions seen in the Bardo of the Clear Light. At this time, Rigpa is the basis for the arising in the experience of the individual of a Body of Light having a miniature size, approximately the size of one's thumb (rig-pa 'od kyi sku tshon-gang gi 'char gzhi). This is like a crystal of salt precipitating out of solution. Whereupon one will feel an aura of light around this body extending for one full fathom and having neither a front nor a back since it is spherical in shape (rang lus 'od 'doms gang mdun dang rgyab med-par snang-ngo). Then, in the spaces of the ten directions of that spherical aura, there will arise incalculable numbers of fivefold pavilions or bubbles of bindus or tiny spheres of rainbow light (de'i phyogs bcu'i nam-mkha' la thig-le'i gur-khang lnga lnga'i dkyil na/ sku'i dkyil-'khor lnga lnga 'char-ro). Within these spherical pavilions or bubbles of light are seen an infinitude of much smaller ones clustered in fives and in the centers of all of them are seen images of the pure realms of Nirvana, the sacred order. These are the fivefold mandalas of the Body, the divine forms of enlightened beings, the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas.

Rigpa is the basis for the arising ('char gzhi) of the Body of Light ('od kyi sku), which is sometimes spoken of as a thumb-sized or miniature-sized human figure of light residing in the heart. And because the basis for the arising of this miniature-sized Body of Light having been present in the middle of one's physical heart while one was alive in the physical body, this display described above arises in this way in the spaces of the ten directions (bdag gi tsi-ta'i dbus kyi 'od kyi sku tshon-gang gi 'char gzhi las/ phyogs bcu'i nam-mkha' la de ltar 'char-ro). Even though the mind and the body have separated at death and latter has disintegrated, Rigpa, the core of one's being, again becomes the center of one's individuality, reconstituting itself as a Body of Light. [32] It is like the crystal lying in the bright sunlight and projecting countless rainbows into space. Having attained the enlightenment of a Buddha by way of the practice of contemplation (khregs-chod) and coming to remain in the Natural State, then, in turn, by way of the practice of vision or Thodgal, one will come to realize the Rupakaya as these Bodies of Light which are projections of the Nature of Mind. They are like the rainbows thrown out by the crystal. In this way, one may proceed as an enlightened being to benefit and instruct other sentient beings. This can be accomplished by projecting Nirmanakaya forms into all dimensions and times. Those disciples of the teachings who have faith, who are spiritually ripe, and who are attuned, whether they find themselves in this present life or in the Bardo, can

come to perceive these Nirmanakaya forms and receive their blessings and teachings. Even though the sun shines equally everywhere on the surface of the earth, nevertheless, one must come out of the darkness of the cave in order to receive the benefits of the warm sunshine.

At that moment, on the threshold of enlightenment in the Bardo, one comes to realize spontaneously the six clairvoyant powers or knowledges (mngon-shes drug) and the six recollections (rjes-dran drug). The first are as follows:
1. one knows clairvoyantly both past and future lives (tshe snga phyi mngon-par shes-pa),
2. one knows clairvoyantly the causes and the consequences of karma (las rgyu 'bras mngon-par shes-pa),
3. one knows clairvoyantly both the pure and the impure realms (dag ma dag gi zhing-khams mngon-par shes-pa),
4. one knows that the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality actually exists (bon-nyid 'od-gsal gyi bar-do yin-par shes-pa),
5. one knows that these three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, are self-manifestations (sgra 'od zer gsum rang-snang yin-par shes-pa), and
6. one knows clairvoyantly the Natural State which is the King who is one's own Knowing Awareness (rang shes-rig gi rgyal-po'i gnas-lugs mngon-par shes-pa).

As for the six recollections (rjes dran drug), they originate at the same time as these clairvoyant powers or knowledges. When the sounds, the lights, and the rays arise in the Bardo, first one recognizes these phenomena and remembers that one has died, realizing that now that one finds oneself in the Bardo of the Clear Light. Then, when one beholds the visions that arise and unfold in this Clear Light, one will recall the Guru and the Yidam at this time. And by recalling them, one will come to remember the Dzogchen teachings and instructions received previously where one was directly introduced to the fact that these visions represent the self-manifestations of the Nature of Mind, and thereby one will recall the Natural State to which one has been directly introduced and encountered in practice during one's lifetime. It is all a matter of recognition and recollection.

These recollections are listed in the text as follows:
1. one remembers that one has departed from this present life (tshe 'phos-pa dran-pa);
2. one remembers that the Bardo exists (bar-do yin-par dran-pa) and
one remembers that Rigpa abides without any material support (rig-pa rten med du gnas-pa dran-pa);
3. one remembers the manifestations which occur at this time and one remembers the Guru (tshe 'di'i snang-ba dran te bla-ma rjes su dran-pa),
4. one remembers once again the meditation deity and the instructions which were taught by the Guru (bla-mas bstan-pa'i yi-dam lha dang gdams-pa rjes su dran-pa);
5. having relied upon these instructions, one remembers that the sounds, the lights, and the rays are only self-manifestations (gdams-ngag la brten nas sgra 'od zer gsum rang-snang yin-par rjes su dran); and
6. one remembers once again the Natural State which is the King who is one's own Knowing Awareness (rang shes-rig gi rgyal-po'i gnas-lugs rjes su dran-pa).

These memories are sustained and imprinted in the very texture of space itself. And by remembering the instructions of the Guru, even though one finds oneself in the Bardo, one can recognize the Natural State and come to remain in it.

The requisite secondary causes having been provided by the presence of these three manifestations, the King who is Rigpa, that is, intrinsic Awareness, comes to see in them his own face (snang-ba gsum gyis rkyen byas nas rig-pa'i rgyal-po bdag zhal gis mthong). This is like a man who sees his own reflection in a mirror. But realizing that they represent only one's own projections, one now comes to live in the condition of the mirror, which is the Natural State of the Nature of Mind, rather than in the reflections which represent illusory holographic projections. With this self-recognition, the delusory appearance, which represent the manifestations of ignorance, are purified or awakened into their own original condition (ma rig 'khrul-pa rang sar sangs) which is emptiness. Moreover, the King who is Rigpa comes to remain thereafter in his own original condition (rig-pa'i rgyal-po rang sar zin), which is that of the condition of the mirror. In this way, it may be said that the King who is Rigpa vanquishes and brings under his dominion all visions and delusory appearances (rig-pa'i rgyal-pos snang-ba zil gyis non te) and thereby he realizes his own sovereign power and independence with regard to the visions (snang-ba la rang-dbang thob-pas) experienced in the Bardo and thereafter. These three manifestations now present

the character of the Trikaya, namely, the sounds correspond to the Dharmakaya, the lights to the Sambhogakaya, and the rays to the Nirmanakaya. Whereupon the whole manifest universe, all of creation, becomes sacralized as the dimension of the Nirmanakaya. All forms become deities and mandalas. All sounds become mantras. And all thoughts and memories become contemplation. This is the realization of the Great Seal, the Mahamudra (phyag-rgya chen-po).

Thereupon, the Trikaya having arisen in this self-arising fashion, they now come to accomplish the benefits of countless beings (de las sku-gsum rang shar du shar nas/ 'gro-ba'i don mdzad-par 'gyur-ro). Unlike the practice of Tantra, where this transformation of one's total being and environment into pure vision requires the deliberate effort of the mind in terms of visualization, mantra recitation, and so on, here in Dzogchen the transformation occurs naturally and spontaneously, without effort. In this way, Dzogchen realizes the ultimate goal of Tantra. One can now accomplish the welfare and instruction of all sentient beings, spontaneously and without effort, by simply being, that is to say, by manifesting one's enlightenment through spontaneously emanating an infinity of Nirmanakaya manifestations. This occurs naturally, effortlessly, and spontaneously, without discursive thoughts, as the free expression of one's inherent energy or compassion, like the sun radiating countless rays of light into the clear open sky, thereby illuminating the entire surface of the earth.

[This commentary to the translation of the text was composed by Vajranatha, John Myrdhin Reynolds, Holte, Denmark, November 1997]

PART THREE

COMMENTARY ON THE TWENTY-ONE LITTLE NAILS: GZER-'GREL

Here is contained "The Commentary on the Twenty-One Little Nails," according to the Oral Transmission from Zhangzhung for the Great Perfection Teachings. (rdzogs-pa chen-po zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud las gzer-bu nyer gcig gi 'grel-pa bzhugs-so)

THE NINETEENTH LITTLE NAIL

TSA. Nineteenth, within the Little Nail of the Time of the Bardo (bar-do dus kyi gzer-bu) there are three topics.

I. The Homage

As for the first, since it says in the root text, "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo, the perfect Buddha who is self-liberation itself!", this expresses the Homage. The significance here is that, if one understands the Bodhichitta, one can attain Buddhahood without recourse to the Bardo.

II. The Commentary to the Text

Second, among the topics in the principal text, there are two parts, namely,
1. the teachings in brief concerning liberation and delusion and
2. the extensive explanation.

A. The Teachings concerning Liberation and Delusion

As for the first, since it says in the root text, "It is revealed at the time of liberation and delusion," this signifies that, if one understands at that time, one becomes liberated, whereas if one does not understand, it becomes the time of delusion.

If someone asks, when is that time? It says in the text, "It is when the external elements disintegrate into their original condition and when the internal elements become reabsorbed." As for the process of the disintegration of the elements and the process of ingathering, this has been elucidated in the Byang-chub sems kyi gnad drug.

Since it says, "The subject, the objects, and the discursive thoughts are all dissolved into the vast expanse of space," this indicates that, at the time of the separating of the body and the mind, the subjectivity, the objects, and all the discursive thoughts are dissolved into the vast expanse of the Kunzhi.

Since it says, "At that time, the Riga abides in its nakedness and the self-originated gnosis is without any obscurations or veilings," it means that, at the time of the separating of the body and the mind, it is possible that one's karma may be pure or that it may be impure. Nevertheless, for a brief moment, the illusion body having been separated from the mental process of the discursive thoughts and from all of the obscurations and veilings represented by visible objects, the Kunzhi and the Rigpa become like the sky free of clouds and the sun free of darkness, respectively. For a brief moment, they abide without any obscurations or coverings.

B. The Extensive Explanation

Second, with respect to the extensive explanation, there are two parts:
1. the teaching on the process of liberation and
2. the teaching on the process of delusion.

B1. The Process of Liberation

Within the first, there are three considerations, that is to say, the process of liberation for the individual of superior spiritual capacity, that for the individual of intermediate spiritual capacity, and that for the individual of inferior spiritual capacity.

B1a. Liberation for the Superior Individual

As for the first, since it says in the text, "Certain fortunate individuals who have come to a clear and definitive decision, having rent the three seals, the three energies are perfected," it means that for those persons possessing confidence, who have just now forsaken the physical body, and having rent (and tore open) the three seals of the body, speech, and mind, thereupon the energies of the Body, Speech, and Mind become perfected. And with these exalted seals (of enlightenment) in hand, they continuously secure the welfare of living beings.

B1b. Liberation for the Intermediate Individual

As for the process of liberation for the individual of intermediate spiritual capacity, since it says in the text, "If one is not liberated from that, then the first Bardo will arise," it means that, just at the moment when the body and the mind separate, if one does not liberate at the precise moment when one abides in the condition of the Natural State, then there will arise the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality.

But if someone asks how that arises? Now at that time, (all of the activities of the elements of) fire, water, earth, and air, as well as all manifestations of the outer vessel and the inner contents (the universe and its inhabitants) having ceased, then the manifestations of the three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, will arise.

With regard to this process, there exist two considerations:
1. the process of arising and
2. the process of liberation.

B1b.1. The Process of Arising

As for the first, the process of arising, it says in the text, "As for the lights, the realms are without centers or boundaries," Therefore, the manifestations of the five lights arise without any above or below; they are without any cardinal or intermediate directions and they are without any center or extremities.

What example is similar to this? As it says in the text, "It is similar to the arising of the rainbow in the sky." Therefore, it arises like the rainbow appearing in the sky.

Since it says, "The sounds are immaterial and soar in the vast expanse of space," this means that the inherent sounds of the state of emptiness which is the Dharmata vibrate and resound in a self-originated manner in the vast expanse of the mind.

What example is similar to this? As it says in the text, "The process of thunder is self-originated and is not interrupted," which means that thunder resounds in the sky in a continuous manner.

Since it says, "The rays represent magical apparitions and display themselves in an uncertain manner," this indicates that these manifestations of rays, which represent the magical manifestations of Rigpa, come to arise, but they arise without any deliberate activity (on the part of Rigpa).

What example is similar to this? As it says, "It is similar to the opening up of a glossy silk cloth or of a woolen blanket," which signifies that it is similar to the opening up a woolen blanket or a glossy silk brocade cloth (in the bright sunlight) where (the sparkling reflections of sunlight) may arise anywhere randomly.

With regard to a person to whom they are familiar and well known, since it says in the text, "The divine forms and the mandalas arise as perfect and complete," this indicates that those who are well acquainted with these instructions (concerning vision practice within Dzogchen) and find (the phenomena) familiar at that time, thereupon, due to the miniature-sized King who is Rigpa, there manifests its own body as a fathom-long body of light.

Furthermore, the illusion body of the present time (one's current physical body) is not like this at all. This Body of Light manifests without any front or back and it is without any cardinal or intermediate directions. And within the spaces of the ten directions of that body, there arise incalculable numbers of bindus and pavilions. Moreover, within each of these bindus, there arise five by five pavilions. In the centers of these fivefold pavilions, there arise five by five divine forms. These appear in the manner of rows and clusters. Moreover, these divine bodies and pavilions do not arise from elsewhere. They arise from the intrinsic Awareness (Rigpa) that is one's own being.

Furthermore, proceeding from the base for the arising of this miniature-sized Body of Light that is at the center of one's own physical heart, (the lights) arise in that way with respect to the spaces in the ten directions. Moreover, even though this fleshly heart is no longer material, nonetheless, the visible lights arises from (the middle of) this heart.

B1b.2. The Process of Liberation

As for the process of liberation, since it says in the text, "At that time, by way of the clairvoyant knowledges and the recollections," this indicates that these six clairvoyant knowledges and the six recollections having arisen (in the stream of consciousness of the individual), one will become liberated. As for these clairvoyant knowledges and these recollections, they are elucidated in the Byang-chub sems kyi gnad drug.

Since it says in the text, "The three kinds of manifestations arise in an informal and familiar manner," this means that these three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, arise in an informal and familiar situation for Rigpa. For example, it is like meeting with someone with whom one has met many times before.

Since it says, "One does not carry on in a familiar manner with oneself," it means that, as in the case where one has used something previously, because of the force of one's familiarity with it, Rigpa acts to carry on with respect to the real meaning of the Natural State.

Since it says, "In these visions one sees one's own face," it signifies that, at that time, these manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays, as well as the visions of the divine forms and the bindus, arise of themselves as the inherent face of one's own intrinsic Awareness and, thereby, one's own being sees itself. What example is similar to this? It is similar to seeing the outlines of one's own face on the surface of the mirror.

Since it says, "Self-Awareness is oneself meeting oneself," this means that, at that time, from the activities of the secondary conditions represented by the three manifestations, one's own being which the King who is Rigpa (or Awareness) comes to meet itself. For example, it is similar to the occasion when the crown prince wanders among the common people and he is recognized as being their prince.

Since it says, "Ignorance and delusion are awakened and purified into their own original condition," it indicates that, because the King who is Rigpa is duly recognized as oneself, one awakens in a self-awakening manner from the darkness of ignorance. For example, it is similar to the sun rising over an island lying in the darkness.

Since it says, "The King who is Rigpa remains in its own original condition," this means that, at this time, because Rigpa remains in its own original condition, it does not pursue and follow after these visions. For example, it is like the crown prince who remains in his own capital.

Since it says, "The sounds, the lights, and the rays are purified in the mind," it means that, at that time, these three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, having been perfected and having been gathered together into the vast expanse of the Kunzhi, thereupon they pass away. For example, it is similar to gathering up the rays of the sun into their mother.

Since it says, "The impure becomes liberated into the vast expanse of the pure," this signifies that these impure manifestations of fire, water, earth, and air, having been self-liberated into the vast expanses of the five pure lights, thereupon pass away. For example, it is similar to ice dissolving into the lake within a brief duration of time.

Since it says, "The polluted is pacified into the state of the unpolluted," it means that this illusory aggregate that is polluted (one's gross physical body), having been self-pacified into the unpolluted state of Gnosis and Body, thereupon passes away. For example, it is similar to a lump of salt dissolving into the water.

Since it says, "Karma and the kleshas are liberated into the Base," this indicates that, having self-liberated all the karma and the kleshas, or emotional defilements that represent the causes of Samsara, directly in the Base that is the Natural State, thereupon they pass away. For example, it is similar to the sky being cleared of the masses of clouds.

Since it says, "It stirs up the depths of the Samsara of the three realms," it indicates that, because karma and the kleshas that represent the causes (of Samsara) are self-liberated, having thus stirred up the depths of the sufferings of Samsara which is the result, thereupon they pass away. For example, it is like (the situation where) the head of the river dries up and there is no cause for the descent (of the water) at its end.

Since it says, "Samsara and Nirvana are without duality and are purified into the Base," this means that all the distinguishing characteristics that are grasped at in terms of the duality of Samsara and Nirvana, having been self-purified into the Base which is the Natural State, thereupon they pass away. For example, it is similar to the fading away of the image of the rainbow while it is dissolving into the sky.

Since it says, "It arises from the power of the Mandalas of the Trikaya," this indicates that at this time the Sambhogakaya arises from the energy of the Dharmakaya and that the Nirmanakayas, having arisen from the energy of the Sambhogakaya, come to accomplish the benefit of beings. For example, (these Nirmanakayas) come forth like the rays of the sun or they arise like the images of the moon reflected on the waters.

B1c. Liberation for the Inferior Individual

Third, as for the process of the liberation of the individual of inferior spiritual capacity: Since it says in the root text, "For those persons who have little familiarity with it (the experience of these phenomena), the King who is Rigpa remains in concealment," this indicates that, even though they may be taught this instruction, for those individuals who have small minds and little familiarity (with the practice and its resultant experiences), the King who is Rigpa remains concealed in the narrow places of the Kunzhi. They do not even know or are aware (when they find themselves in the Bardo) that they are present before the real meaning of the Natural State, and so they do not come to abide in the manner of a Jina or Victorious One (that is, a Buddha).

Since it says, "Having abided there from one to three (days)," it means that Rigpa abides in the narrow places of the Kunzhi. It may abide for one day or for two days or for three days (after psychic death), or it may even abide for only an instant or for a short duration.

Since it says, "But in seven days the purity will progressively arise," this means that, from one day until seven days (after psychic death), on each of these days there will arise successively the white light, the green light, the red light, the blue light, and the yellow light, and so on.

Since it says, "But the realms will not arise as perfected (and complete)," this signifies that, due to the power of having little familiarity (with the practice), the divine forms and the mandalas do not arise in a complete (and perfect manner). But there will arise no disintegration of these three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays.

Since it says, "Due to the presence of these secondary conditions, there may come about liberation in the Bardo (for that individual)," this signifies that, in some future time to come, having performed virtuous deeds, having been taught the instructions (for Dzogchen) by the Gurus, and having received prophecies from the Yidam, one will come to find liberation in the Bardo of the Clear Light.

Since it says, "But if one does not find liberation (at that time), there will arise various impure visions," this indicates that, when one does not liberate from that (experience of the Bardo), the five pure lights having gone into concealment or occultation, there will arise the manifestations of fire, water, earth, and air that represent the impure (elements).

Since it says, "But also, one may see pure visions in the Bardo of Existence," it means that the Bardo of Existence having arisen from that (previous Bardo), due to the power of white karma, one may come to see some pure visions from these sounds, lights, and rays.

Since it says, "One will come to quickly liberate from this continuum of transmigration in the good places," this means that, with respect to that, one will transmigrate from one pure place to another and, having prolonged one's ripened karma therein, one comes ultimately to liberation from Samsara.

B2. The Process of Delusion

Second, as for the teaching concerning the process of delusion: Since it says in the root text, "Those individuals who lack access to the gateway of the instructions (for Dzogchen) do not even recognize the clarity of the Natural State," this indicates that, for one who has not yet systematically entered into the gateway of the instructions (for Dzogchen), the body and the mind having separated (at death), at the time when one abides in the state of the Clear Light, one does not even recognize the clear luminosity of the Natural State when it is without any obscurations or veilings.

Since it says, "These visions are perceived as being real and as being manifestations due to another," this means that, in the Bardo of the Clear Light, one does not even know that these three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, are self-manifestations. One perceives these visions as existing outside oneself and beyond one's own mind-stream.

Since it says, "One affixes the seal of delusion and thereby continues to wander in Samsara," this signifies that, in the Bardo of Existence, some visions that are delusions having arisen in terms of the sounds, the lights, and the rays, one comes to create the causes for Samsara because of that, and so one continues to wander lost in Samsara.

And since it says in the text, "Because of that, a fortunate individual should come to a clear and definitive decision," it indicates that, because liberation and delusion are indeed very special and particular, the fortune individual (possessing good karma), will come to a clear and definitive decision during the present time (while one is yet alive).

III. The Conclusion

Third, the Conclusion is expressed in the text. The commentary to the Nineteenth Little Nail is completed.

[Translated by John Myrdhin Reynolds, Amsterdam, August 1995]

COMMENTARY TO THE TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT

When the practitioner of Dzogchen has not attained the final goal of the realization of Buddhahood and the liberation from the cyclical existence of Samsara in this present lifetime, then one must continue to circulate in transmigration and enter once again into the Bardo experience following one's death. This experience is explained here in this Nineteenth Little Nail, which is entitled "The Little Nail of the Time of the Bardo (bar-do dus kyi gzer-bu)." A "little nail" (gzer-bu) is a metaphor for an essential point (gnad) in the teaching and this is the nineteenth essential point extracted from the text entitled "The Commentary on the Twenty-One Little Nails," according to the Oral Transmission from Zhang-zhung for the Great Perfection Teachings. (rDzogs-pa chen-po zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud las gzer-bu nyer gcig gi 'grel-pa). The root text for which this text is the commentary is known as "The Twenty-One Little Nails (gZer-bu nyer-gcig)" and belongs to the exceedingly secret section (yang gsang) of the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud collection of Bonpo Dzogchen teachings. On this cycle of teaching, see my forthcoming book, Space, Awareness, and Energy, 1998.

As usual, there are found here the three principal topics and this case, they may be tabulated as follows:

I. The Homage
II. The Commentary to the Text
A. The Teaching in Brief concerning Liberation and Delusion
B. The Extensive Explanation
- B1. The Process of Liberation
  - B1a. Liberation for the Superior Individual
  - B1b. Liberation for the Intermediate Individual
    - 1. The Process of Arising
    - 2. The Process of Liberation
  - B1c. Liberation for the Inferior Individual
- B2. The Process of Delusion

III. The Conclusion

Regarding the significance of the Homage to the Primordial Buddha Kuntu Zangpo, it is explained that if one comes to understand the Bodhichitta, which is the Natural State of the Nature of Mind, in this present lifetime, one will attain Buddhahood without the necessity to undergo the Bardo experience once again (kun tu bzang-po rang-grol rdzogs sangs-rgyas la phyag 'tshal-lo zhes-pas phyag 'tshal-ba bstan te/ byang-chub kyi sems rtogs na bar-do med-par sangs-rgyas-par bstan-pa'o) Self-liberation (rang-grol) is the method of practice proper to Dzogchen, in contrast to the path of transformation (bsgyur-lam) in Tantra and the path of renunciation (spong-lam) in Sutra.

The Commentary to the Text is divided into two parts, namely,

1. the teachings in brief concerning liberation and delusion (grol 'khrul mdor bstan-pa) and
2. the extensive explanation (rgyas-par bshad-pa).

A. The Teachings concerning Liberation and Delusion

The text speaks of the time of liberation and delusion (grol dang 'khrul-pa'i dus) that occurs just after the black-out or state of total emptiness at following true psychic death and with the first dawning of the Clear Light experienced with the onset of the Bardo. If one understands (rtogs-pa) at that time and recognizes the nature of this Clear Light of Reality (bon-nyid 'od-gsal), that it represents the visible self-manifestation of the inherent luminous clarity of one's own Nature of Mind (sems-nyid kyi rang-gsal), then one becomes liberated (grol-ba) from rebirth in Samsara. Whereas if one does not understand (ma rtogs-pa) and fails to recognize the Clear Light, it then becomes the time for the onset of delusions, the illusory appearances conjured up at the time of the Bardo (grol dang 'khrul-pa'i dus bstan-pa zhes-pas/ rtogs na grol-ba dang ma rtogs 'khrul-pa'i dus bstan-pa'o). In this case, the impure karmic visions of the Bardo of Existence will come to unfold before the stream of consciousness of the deceased. Thus, this is the occasion of the Boundary (so-mtshams) existing between liberation and delusion, between Nirvana and Samsara, when two roads or paths lie open before the individual, one leading to the enlightenment of a Buddha and the other to the delusions of an ordinary sentient being still caught up in rebirth within cyclical existence. Therefore, there exists a single Base, the Natural State of the Nature of Mind, but two Paths and two Fruits.

The time of the disjunction between the path of liberation and the path of delusion occurs when the external elements have disintegrated into their original condition, which is space, and when the internal elements have gone into remission and are reabsorbed (phyi'i 'byung-ba rang sar zhig/ nang gi 'byung-ba bag la zha zhes-pas). The external elements are earth, water, fire, air, and space or ether. With the process of the disintegration of the elements ('byung-ba zhig tshul) of the physical body, they progressively dissolve in the reverse order upward into one another, as described elsewhere in the Tibetan Books of the Dead. The internal elements are flesh, blood, heat, breath, and consciousness. With the process of ingathering (bsdu tshul), these elements progressively grow weaker and are reabsorbed. This has been described in the text called the Byang-chub sems kyi gnad drug, "The Six Essential Points of the Bodhichitta" ('byung-ba zhig tshul dang bsdu tshul ni/ byang-chub sems kyi gnad drug na gsal-lo). See above.

At the time of psychic death, where the circulation of all psychic energy in the corpse ceases, the body and the mind ultimately and finally separate and the stream of consciousness of the individual experiences the black-out, or state of total emptiness known as the Bardo of Emptiness (stong-pa'i bar-do). Moreover, all sense of subjectivity and of objectivity (bzung 'dzin), as well as all discursive thoughts (rnam-rtog), are dissolved into the vast expanse of space of the Kunzhi, which has the nature of spaciousness and emptiness (bzung 'dzin rnam-rtog klong du thim zhes-pas/ bzung 'dzin rnam-rtog thams-cad kun-gzhi'i klong du thim-pa'o).

At the time of psychic or true death when all the circulations of psychic energy have stopped, everything is dissolved back in the Kunzhi which is the Great Mother. But whether this experience of the Bardo of Emptiness of a short or long duration depends on the individual's karma and whether or not one has been a practitioner of Dzogchen and Tantra during one's previous lifetime. Nevertheless, on this occasion, the Natural State is revealed clearly in all its nakedness, freed from all the vestments and obscurations due to mind and discursive thoughts. For truly, the Natural State of the Nature of Mind is what lies beyond mind. And when the mind totally ceases to function and operate, the Nature of Mind stands revealed in all its glory, the light within. The thought process, the computer of the mind, has been shut down and all is quiet. It does not matter at this point whether one's karma is pure or impure, for white clouds and black clouds equally obscure the face of the sun in the sky. However, this experience of emptiness is not a chill dark nothingness-- but the ecstatic experience of the intrinsic freedom and openness of the vast sky devoid of clouds, with the sun shining in the heavens and illuminating space everywhere with its light. This is a hierophany, a revelation of the sacred nature of the sky. [1] This was the original condition of the individual before the clouds of Samsara arose on the distant horizon, gathered and thickened, and came to obscure and conceal the true face of the sun.

Thus, at this time when the body and the mind have separated, Rigpa abides in total nakedness and its self-originated gnosis is without any obscurations or veilings (de tshe rig-pa gcer-bur gnas/ rang-'byung ye-shes sgrib g.yogs med ces-pas). For that brief moment when the illusion body (sgyu-ma'i lus), that is, the physical body created by one's past karma, has been separated from the mental processes of the discursive thoughts (rnam-rtog gi blo) and from all of the obscurations and veilings represented by visible objects, the Kunzhi and the Rigpa become like the sky free of clouds and the sun free of darkness (lus sems bral-ba'i tshe/ las dag rung ma dag rung/ lan gcig sgyu-ma'i lus dang rnam-rtog gi blo dang/ snang-ba yul gyi sgrib g.yogs thams-cad bral nas/ kun-gzhi dang rig-pa nyi-ma smag dang bral-ba'am/ nam-mkha' sprin dang bral-ba bzhin/ lan gcig sgrib g.yogs med-par gnas-so).

Now unobscured by either body or mind, they appear in all their nakedness, as the open cloudless sky and as the rising sun, so this is the moment of the dawning of the Clear Light. And this represents the explanation of the teaching in brief. Then the question must be examined in more detail of how either liberation (grol-ba), the visions of the divine and sacred order of Nirvana, arises or how delusion ('khrul-pa), the profane order of rebirth in Samsara, arises.

B. The Extensive Explanation

The extensive explanation (rgyas-par bshad-pa) consists of two parts:
1. the teaching concerning the process of liberation (grol tshul bstan-pa) and
2. the teaching concerning the process of delusion ('khrul tshul bstan-pa).

Liberation means transcending all limitations and conditioning and entering into the intrinsic freedom of one's inherent Buddhahood, whereas delusion means entering again into the limiting and illusory structures of Samsara. First to be considered is the process by which one obtains liberation at the moment of the onset of the Bardo.

B1. The Process of Liberation

This process of liberation is expounded with regard to three types of individuals: the individual of superior spiritual capacity, the individual of intermediate spiritual capacity, and the individual of inferior spiritual capacity (dbang-po rab 'bring tha-ma gsum grol tshul bstan-pa'o).

B1a. Liberation for the Superior Individual

The individual of a superior spiritual capacity, because of being directly introduced by way of the Dzogchen teachings to the Natural State, has come to a clear and definitive decision (dmar thag-chod-pa) regarding it. For this reason such an individual is called fortunate (skal-ldan). And because of this definitive decision and having repeatedly discovered for oneself what Rigpa is in terms of the practice of Dzogchen and, coming to remain in the Natural State, this superior individual develops a sure and unshakable confidence (gdeng dang ldan-pa). [2] Therefore, at the time of death when the body and the mind separate, one tears open or dissolves the three seals of one's mundane and profane body, speech, and mind, and allows for the manifestation, in their full perfection, of the enlightened energies of the Body, Speech, and Mind of the Buddha. And with these exalted three seals of enlightenment in hand, one can continuously secure the welfare of living beings (dmar thag-chod-pa'i skal-ldan 'ga'/ rgya gsum ral nas rtsal gsum rdzogs zhes-pas/ gdeng dang ldan-pa'i gang-zag rnams ni/ phung-po bor ma thag/ lus ngag yid gsum gyi rgya gsum ral nas/ sku gsung thugs kyi rtsal gsum rdzogs te/ 'gro don rgya lag phyad-par 'gyur-ro).

The best among those of a superior spiritual capacity (yang rab) attain the final realization of Buddhahood and liberation from Samsara while yet alive and do not even need to die or enter the Bardo experience. Even without dying, one's physical body spontaneously dissolves into pure radiant energy and fades away into space, whereupon one reappears as a Body of Light. This process is known as the Body of Light of the Great Transfer ('pho-ba chen-po'i 'od sku) and the master Tapihritsa was one example of this. Having dissolved into light a long time previously, he reappeared as a Body of Light in the guise of a small child in order to teach his disciple Gyerpungpa. [3]

However, an individual of a merely superior spiritual capacity attains liberation just at the point of psychic death without the necessity of going through the Bardo experience. This, of course, occurs after the visible death of the gross physical body, although a psychic life, normally invisible to the outside observer, continues for a time. Such an individual, by virtue of the practice of contemplation during one's lifetime, has become familiar with the Natural State. At the moment of psychic death, one sees clearly and nakedly the Natural State, recalling it and thereafter remains in it continuously. This occurs even before the advent of the Clear Light of Reality in the Bardo. Having thus attained liberation, such an individual can re-manifest as a Body of Light, or Rupakaya, in order to benefit and instruct other sentient beings. Manifesting a Body of Light gives the enlightened being the capacity to appear to others and communicate with them.

How is this Body of Light accomplished? First the impure visions are dissolved into the pure ones, like ice melting into water, that is to say, the impure gross physical elements dissolve into the luminescent essences that are the pure clear lights in the respective colors. The pure and the impure become integrated, the one into the other without separation. All these visions of light, both the pure and the impure, derive from the same source which is the Natural State. Reversing the process of their evolution (ru-log), the impure elements dissolve into these essences that are rainbow lights and then into empty space itself. Nevertheless, the physical body may even be observed by outsiders to shrink visibly in size and emit rainbows of light as its gross matter progressively transforms into pure radiant energy. At the end of this process, which normally takes three to seven days, the gross physical body dissolves completely and all that remains of the deceased individual are hair, nails, and one's clothes. This process is known as the Rainbow Body ('ja'-jus). [4]

However, there exist a number of methods in Dzogchen and in Tantra which lead to the disappearance of the physical body, but these are not precisely the same as the Rainbow Body. For this process to occur, the practitioner must have attained final

realization of the fourth stage of vision (snang-ba mthar-thug) and become stable in the Natural State. Then all the visions, both pure and impure, will dissolve and disappear of themselves into the Natural State. In the case of the Rainbow Body, one is performing Clear Light or Thodgal practice. But there also exists a method found in Tregchod for dissolving one's gross physical body into its atomic and subatomic constituents. This is known as the atom body (rdul-lus). This, however, is not the Rainbow Body and neither is the Gyulu or Illusion Body (sgu-lus) realized through the Tantric practice of transformation. Sometimes the physical body may be integrated with the illusion body of the Yidam and come itself to disappear. This Gyulu is realized by way of attaining the culmination of the perfection process (rdzogs-rim), where one actually comes to realize that one is in the body of the Yidam, experiencing its feelings and sensations. This is known as the primal awareness or gnosis of bliss and emptiness (bde stong ye-shes). This has been sometimes called the Rainbow Body, but more accurately termed "the traversing of the sky" (mkha' spyod), and is not what is meant by the Rainbow Body in Dzogchen. [5]

This attaining of enlightenment occurs, not gradually and by stages (rim gyis), but instantaneously (cig-car), so such an individual of superior spiritual capacity is compared elsewhere in the Dzogchen literature to a lion's cub and to a Garuda chick just hatched from the egg. Immediately after the lion cub is born and has dried, it appears just the same as its adult mother and can go anywhere its mother goes. Furthermore, the Garuda does not set down on the land anywhere, but remains soaring above and eating and drinking from the clouds. It carried its egg in its claws and when the time is ready, the Garuda chick emerges fully formed from the egg and is able immediately to fly aloft with its mother. Both of these examples suggest that enlightenment emerges fully formed and complete, without any need to grow to maturity. For this reason, the Garuda is often taken as a symbol of the practice of Dzogchen. [6]

B1b. Liberation for the Intermediate Individual

However, the individual of intermediate spiritual capacity does not attain liberation in this present life, but must undergo the process of death and attains liberation in the first Bardo, the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality. [gal-te de las ma grol na/ de nas bar-do dang-po 'char zhes-pas] Just at the moment when the body and the mind separate, if one does not liberate at that precise moment when one abides in the condition of the Natural State, which is known as the Bardo of Emptiness, then there will arise the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality. [lus sems bral ma thag/ gnas-lugs kyi ngang la gnas-pa'i tshe ma grol na/ de nas bon-nyid 'od-gsal gyi bar-do 'char-ro] That is to say, if one has not liberated into the Natural State previously, then the experiences of the Bardo will arise.

How does this occur? At that time when the external elements have disintegrated and all of the activities of the internal elements, as well as all manifestations of the thought process or mind and the circulation of psychic energy have ceased and one comes to experience psychic death, then the manifestations of the three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, will arise with the onset of the Bardo. This may be described in terms of

1. the process of arising ('char tshul) and
2. the process of liberation (grol tshul).

B1b.1. The Process of Arising

Now, with the onset of the Bardo, the manifestations of the five clear lights arise without any above or below, without any cardinal or intermediate directions, without any center or extremities ('od ni zhing-khams mtha' dbus med ces-pas/ 'od lnga'i snang-ba steng dang 'og med/ phyogs dang mtshams med/ mtha' dang dbus med-par 'char-ro). This is like the arising of a rainbow in the sky (mkha' la gzha'-tshon shar-ba 'dra zhes-pas).

Moreover, the inherent sounds of the emptiness which is the Dharmata (bon-nyid) vibrate and resound in a self-originated manner within the vast expanse of the space of the Mind (sgra ni dngos-med klong na lding zhes-pas/ bon-nyid stong-pa'i rang sgra/ sems kyi klong na rang-'byung du grag-go). This is like the distant continuous rumble of thunder (rang-'byung rgyan med 'brug sgra'i tshul zhes-pas), and this forms a kind of background noise to existence.

These lights and sounds that manifest are not of an external origin, but arise internally and naturally. The practitioner is introduced to them by the Guru, for example, by pressing the thumbs on the closed lids of the eye balls, causing one to see circles of light. Or by pressing the fingers into the ears, so that one comes to hear a distant roar. These are explained as being examples of inherent lights and inherent sounds (rang 'od dang rang sgra).

The rays that manifest at this time represent holograms or three-dimensional magical apparitions which display themselves in a probabilistic rather than a determined or certain manner (zer ni cho-'phrul nges med ston zhes-pas). These holograms or magical manifestations of Rigpa, being similar to the phantoms and illusions conjured up by a magician are, nevertheless, uncreated, arising without any deliberate intention or activity on the part of anyone (rig-pa'i cho-'phrul zer gyi snang-ba 'di 'char bya-ba dang/ 'di mi 'char bya-ba med de). This display of light represents a free spontaneous self-perfection (lhun gyis grub-pa). These holographic phenomena may arise anywhere. There exists no limitations upon the numbers and the kinds of visions that may arise. Therefore, this is said to be is similar to the opening up of a glossy silk cloth or of a woolen blanket in the bright sunlight where the sparkling reflections of sunlight may appear anywhere at random (za-'og snam-bu kha phye 'dra zhes-pas).

If the individual in question is a Dzogchen practitioner who is familiar with the Natural State through the practice of contemplation (khregs-chod) during one's previous lifetime, as well as being familiar with these sounds, lights, and rays experienced many times before in vision practice (thod-rgal) and dark retreat practice (mun-mtshams), then at this time, with the onset of the Bardo, one will remember and recognize these phenomena. They will seem quite familiar, like the faces of old friends, and their nature is readily recognized by the practitioner. Gazing into this kaleidoscopic display of a chaos of colors and fractiles, an inherent order spontaneously arises and one comes to see the Nirvanic visions of mandalas and divine forms in all their complete perfection (sku dang dkyil-'khor rdzogs-par 'char zhes-pas). Again one will remember and recognize them. One will realize that these visions are self-manifestations arising from the Natural State and there exists no doubt with regard to their nature. They are not real or material or come from outside oneself. One realizes that they are unreal and immaterial, that they are only projections coming from the miniature-sized King who is Rigpa, just as rainbow refractions come from the crystal placed in the bright sunlight or like the holographic projections generated by lasers and holographic film. All of these visions, no matter how glorious, beautiful, or alluring, are merely illusions, only light in space, without any substance, solidity, or reality. They have no actual above or below, front or back, yet they are visible shapes. But knowing them to be insubstantial and unreal, one does not follow after them or pursue them, as one can no more catch in one's hand a rainbow or a mirage.

Nevertheless, for the practitioner who is well acquainted with the instructions concerning vision practice within Dzogchen and finds these phenomena familiar at that time when confronted with them in the Bardo, the miniature-sized King who is Rigpa manifests its own form as a Body of Light approximately one fathom across (gdams-pa 'di la goms shing 'dris-pa rnams ni/ de tshe rig-pa'i rgyal-po tshon-gang las/ rang lus 'od lus 'doms gang du snang-ngo). Metaphorically, the King who is Rigpa is called miniature-sized, literally thumb-sized (tshon-gang), because it is depicted as a miniature figure or man of light residing in the heart.

Furthermore, the illusion body one's possesses at the present time, that is, one's current physical body, is not at all like this. This Body of Light is luminous, spherical in shape, and manifests without any front or back. It is without any cardinal or intermediate directions, so it transcends the usual conventions of three-dimensional space and might be called a hyper-sphere. And within all the spaces of the ten directions of that aura or body of light, there arise incalculable numbers of bindus, or tiny spheres of rainbow light (thig-le), that are clustered into pavilions, or bubble-like rainbow structures of light. Moreover, within each of these bindus, there arise five by five pavilions. In the centers of these fivefold pavilions, there arise five by five divine forms. [7] Moreover, within each of these bindus, there are seen clusters of five spheres and within each of them the divine forms of enlightened beings, the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas, are clearly visible. These luminous and glorious figures of the celestial hierarchies are both sitting in rows and in clusters like stars, and each of them is conferring blessings and teaching the Dharma. These divine bodies and pavilions are unreal and insubstantial and in themselves, they are empty forms. They arise from the Natural State and eventually dissolve back into the Natural State. They do not arise and appear in the sky above from anywhere else, but simply arise from the intrinsic awareness or Rigpa that is the core of one's own being. For example, this is similar to the orb of the sun and its rays of light.

Previously, when one was alive in a physical body, this King who is Rigpa, this miniature-sized man of light, resided in the middle of one's physical heart which is made

of flesh. But now the flesh of the physical body and the walls of the physical heart have disintegrated, like smashing a clay vessel into tiny fragments. Now the inner space within the vessel and the outer space beyond have integrated and become one. And Rigpa, like the face of the sun now free of clouds, is revealed in all its nakedness. Being now without the physical support of the heart and the body, it remains suspended in the middle of space in all its pristine glory. Even though its former vessel and container, the fleshly heart was material (gdos-pa sha'i tsi-ta), the Rigpa is not material, but has the same nature as space itself. So, it was not destroyed when the body has disintegrated or when the electro-chemical activities of the brain have ceased. The Rigpa is fundamental, it is not some fleeting epiphenomena dependent on a material support. Rigpa is enfolded and subsists in the very nature of space itself, because space and luminosity, extension and awareness, Kunzhi and Rigpa, have been inseparable from the very beginning. Whereas previously the visible light of awareness arose from the space within the hollow inside the physical heart now the clay vessel of the body has been shattered and the internal and external spaces have become integrated. Thus, the light of Awareness is sustained, whether it is manifest as conscious life or as unmanifest ever-present potentiality.

If during one's lifetime one has been a practitioner of Thodgal and the dark retreat, then one has come to a direct and immediate experience of the inner light of Rigpa residing in the heart. That inner light residing in the hollow within the heart, this being the base (gzhi), then moves through the translucent channel or smooth white nerve of the Kati, this being the pathway (lam), to the gateway (sgo) of the eyes where it is projected outward into the space in front of ourselves. The medium or screen for this projection may be either sunlight, empty space, or total darkness, these representing the secondary conditions (rkyen) for the manifestation of the visions. Conventionally, these visions which appear out there in space are called external appearances (phyi snang) and they are believed to be solid and real and to be manifestations due to other causes that come from outside oneself (gzhan snang). But they are actually only projections or manifestations of mind (sems kyi snang-ba). This is readily understood in the case of hallucinations, dreams, and the visions seen in a dark retreat. But it is equally the case of the visions one sees in ordinary life during the normal waking state. These everyday experiences are expressions of our human impure karmic vision. Because of the inexhaustible effulgence of the Treasury of the Mind, which is the Natural State, every possible kind of vision, whether pure or impure, can and does eventually arise. Nevertheless, all of these visions have the same quality of being projections and manifestations of mind. And because the practitioner of an intermediate spiritual capacity has not yet attained final realization, one becomes limited by boundaries and habits of thought. Only when the practitioner attains final realization is it the case that no limitations whatsoever remain. Then one is totally free. This represents the intrinsic freedom of Buddhahood.

B1b.2. The Process of Liberation

As for the process of liberation (grol tshul), it says in the text that, at this time, with the onset of the Bardo of the Clear Light, because the six clairvoyant knowledges (mngon-shes drug) and the six recollections (rjes-dran drug) arise in the stream of consciousness of the individual of intermediate spiritual capacity, one becomes liberated from delusion (mngon-shes drug dang rjes-dran drug shar nas grol te). These clairvoyant knowledges and recollections are elucidated in the Byang-chub sems kyi gnad drug, "The Six Essential Points of the Bodhichitta," and in the 'Khor-lo bzhi sbrag, "The Setting Side by Side of the Four Wheels." See above.

In the Bardo, the three manifestations the sounds, the lights, and the rays, arise as an informal and familiar manner for Rigpa, like meeting with someone with whom one has met many times before (snang-ba rnam gsum sun-mar 'char zhes-pas/ sgra 'od zer gsum ni rig-pa'i sun-mar 'char te/ dper na sngar 'dris kyis mi dang 'phrad-pa bzhin-no). Practice of vision and dark retreat during one's lifetime has been a preparation for this recognition. One remembers that these visions arise from the Natural State and one knows that they are empty, insubstantial, and lacking in any inherent existence. And because of the force of this familiarity, Rigpa remains in the real significance of the Natural State (rang gis goms-pas skyel ma byas zhes-pas/ sngon du gang bskyel na/ rang gis goms-pa'i stobs kyis/ rig-pa gnas-lugs kyi don la skyel-bar byed-do). All of these visions, whether pure or impure, have the same nature and so Rigpa comes to see its own face in each of these visions. These manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays, as well as the visions of the divine forms and the bindus, all arise of themselves as the inherent face of one's own intrinsic

Awareness and thereby one's own being comes to see itself (snang-ba bdag zhal bdag gis mthong zhes-pas/ de'i tshe sgra 'od zer gsum gyi snang-ba dang/ sku dang thig-le'i snang-ba de rnams/ bdag gi rig-pa'i rang zhal rang shar yin te/ de rang nyid kyis rang mthong-ba'o). For example, this is similar to seeing the outlines of one's own face in the surface of the mirror.

One's own being sees itself and one becomes what one sees. One now lives in the condition of the mirror and not in the condition of the reflections. Self-Awareness (rang-rig) meets itself due to the presence of these secondary conditions represented by the three manifestations in space. This is like a crown prince who has wandered among the common people for years unrecognized in the guise of a beggar boy. And now he is suddenly recognized beneath all the tattered and dirty rags by all of the people as their long lost prince and they escort him to the royal palace to be crowned and enthroned. Everyone in the kingdom rejoices at this public recognition (rang-rig bdag dang bdag tu mjal zhes-pas/ de' tshe snang-ba gsum gyis rkyen byas nas/ rig-pa'i rgyal-po bdag dang bdag tu mjal te/ dper na rgyal-bu rmangs su 'khyams-pa'i tshe/ rgyal-bu yin-par ngo-shes-pa dang 'dra).

It is the same way with Rigpa. Once one has realized the Natural State and the nature of Self-Awareness, then one needs to practice it in order that it becomes stable. The King who is Rigpa having been recognized in all appearances and visions, then both ignorance and delusion will dissolve of themselves, awakening into their own original condition (rang sar sangs). One awakens in a self-awakening manner from the darkness of ignorance, just like to the sun rising over an island previously covered by the darkness of night (ma rig 'khrul-pa rang sar sangs zhes-pas/ rig-pa'i rgyal-po rang ngo-shes-pas/ ma rig-pa'i mun-pa rang sangs su sangs te/ dper na mun-pa'i gling la nyi-ma shar-ba dang 'dra). This King who is Rigpa, in his self-recognition, comes to remain in its own original condition and does not pursue and follow after these alluring phantom visions, much like a king who is thoroughly contented with his own situation and remains always on his throne in his own capital (rig-pa'i rgyal-po rang sa zin ces-pas/ de'i tshe rig-pa rang sa zin-pas/ snang-ba'i rjes su mi 'breng ste/ dper na rgyal-bus rgyal-sa zin-pa dang 'dra). This King who is Awareness becomes like a mighty emperor who brings under his dominion all delusory appearances, just as when the sun is high in the sky, all darkness is driven forth and disappears. These false visions having no support, fall away and disappear of themselves. They are said to be self-liberated into the Natural State.

The sounds, the lights, and the rays, having been perfected in this way by self-liberation, are gathered together into the vast expanse of the Kunzhi and allowed to pass away, like the rays of the sun being gathered up into their mother when the sun sets below the horizon (sgra 'od zer gsum sems su dag ces-pas/ de'i tshe sgra 'od zer gsum kun-gzhi'i klong du 'ubs chub nas 'gro-ba yin/ dper na nyi zer ma la 'dus-pa dang 'dra). In the same way, all impure visions and all impure elements dissolve into the Natural State that is purity itself, total primordial purity (ka-dag chen-po). This process where all visions dissolve back into the Natural State once more, represents the culmination of the four (or five) stages in the development of vision (snang-ba bzhi) described in Thodgal practice. Thus, all impurities become liberated into the vast expanse of purity itself. That is to say, the impure manifestations of the elements of fire, water, earth, and air, having been spontaneously self-liberated into the vast expanse of the five pure lights, the physical body itself now dissolves and passes away, like ice dissolving into the waters of a lake in a brief span of time (snyigs-ma dang dangs-ma'i klong du grol zhes-pas/ snyigs-ma me chu sa rlung gi snang-ba rnams/ dangs-ma 'od lnga'i klong du rang-grol nas ste/ dper na dar zhig mtsho la thim-pa 'dra). In this way, the illusory aggregate that is polluted, one's gross physical body, having been self-pacified into the pure and unpolluted state of the Body and the Gnosis (sku dang ye-shes), light and Awareness respectively, then dissolves and passes away as a physical mass, like a lump of salt dissolving into the water (zag-bcas zag-med ngang du zhi zhes-pas/ zag-bcas sgyu-ma'i phung-po/ zag-med sku dang ye-shes ngang du rang zhi nas 'gro ste). [8] Here the reference is to the dissolving of the gross material body at the time of death into space, a process that is known as the Rainbow Body ('ja'-lus).

Again, in this way, karma and the kleshas or emotional defilements, which represent the causes of Samsara, become directly liberated into the Base that is the Natural State, when they dissolve and pass away, like the sky being cleared of the masses of clouds (las dang nyon-mongs gzhi la grol zhes-pas/ 'khor-ba'i rgyu las dang nyon-mongs thams-cad

gnas-lugs gzhi thog tu rang-grol nas 'gro ste). Because these causes of Samsara are self-liberated into the Natural State which is the Base, one can thus speak of stirring up the depths of the sufferings of the ocean of Samsara. Thereupon this suffering passes away, like the situation where the spring at the head of the river dries up and there is no cause for the descent of water to the river's end (khams gsum 'khor-ba dong nas sprugs zhes-pas/ rgyu las dang nyon-mongs-pa rang-grol-bas/ 'bras-bu 'khor-ba'i sdug-bsngal dong nas sprug nas 'gro ste). Moreover, all dualities become eliminated because the distinguishing characteristics of both Samsara and Nirvana have been self-purified into the Base which is the Natural State, where they pass away like the fading away of the image of the rainbow when it dissolves into the space ('khor 'das gnyis-med gzhi la dag ces-pas/ 'khor 'das gnyis 'dzin gyi mtshan-ma thams-cad/ gnas-lugs gzhi thog rang dag nas 'gro ste).

At that time, even though all visions have faded away and dissolved back into the Natural State which is the Base, like the fading away of the rainbow, nevertheless, this is not just a blank nothingness like an empty page. [9] Rather, effortlessly and in a moment, from the energy inherent in the Dharmakaya itself, experienced as this state of emptiness, the Sambhogakaya spontaneously arises. Following upon this, as the expression of the energy of the Sambhogakaya, an infinite number of Nirmanakayas spontaneously arise and emanate in order to accomplish everywhere throughout the entire universe and the entire three times the benefit of beings, like the rays that come forth from the sun or like the images of the moon reflected on the waters (sku-gsum dkyil-'khor shugs las shar ces-pas/ de'i tshe bon-sku'i rtsal las rdzogs-sku rang shar/ rdzogs-sku'i rtsal las sprul-sku rang shar nas 'gro-ba'i don mdzad-par gyur te/ dper na nyi-ma las zer byung'am/ zla-ba las chu zla shar-ba bzhin-no). In general, this process of spontaneous and uncaused enlightenement may be compared to the rising of the sun (the Sambhogakaya) in the sky (the Dharmakaya) and the diffusing into every direction of its rays (the countless Nirmanakayas) so that the entire universe becomes illuminated by its light.

B1c. Liberation for the Inferior Individual

In terms of the process for the liberation of the individual of inferior spiritual capacity (dbang-po tha-ma'i grol tshul), this is an individual who has not yet realized the Natural State and has not practiced contemplation very much. Therefore, one has very little familiarity with the experience of those phenomena that are seen in practice. Such persons are said to be small minded (blo chung-ba). And having little experience gained from practice, Rigpa remains in concealment, hidden in the narrow places or folds in the fabric of space of the Kunzhi. Therefore, such an individual does not know or is not aware of being present before the real meaning of the Natural State. So, one does not become established in the style of being a Buddha (goms-pa chung-ba'i gang-zag rnams rig-pa'i rgyal-po bag la zha zhes-pas/ gdams-ngag 'di bstan yang goms-pa chung-ba dang/ blo-chung-ba rnams ni/ rig-pa'i rgyal-po kun-gzhi'i bag la zha ste/ gnas-lugs kyi don la gnas kyang mi shes te/ rgyal-ba'i tshul du gnas-pa'o). Even though one now finds oneself in the Bardo, the King who is Rigpa, having just been awakened from the obscurations and the negative emotional defilements, and being disconnected from the physical elements of the body, nevertheless, does not realize it is naked in the condition of the Natural State. Rather, one remains for a time in unconsciousness or black-out, while the Rigpa is in occultation or concealment, enfolded within the space itself.

The duration of this occultation is not exactly fixed, but may last up to three days. Externally the breathing has stopped and there exist certain signs for determining this. And internally consciousness becomes progressively detached from the body. Some practitioners can remain in the Natural State for three days or more, but the non-practitioner in general only remains for a short time, or just for a brief moment, in this condition, before the onset of the Bardo when the visions of lights begin to appear. As the text states, for one or two or three days after psychic death, the Rigpa may abide in concealment within the narrow places of the Kunzhi, or this occultation may endure only be for a brief instant. Then for seven days, the pure visions will progressively arise, so that clear lights successively dawn (gcig nas gsum gyi bar 'dug nas zhes-pas/ rig-pa kun-gzhi'i bag la gnas te/ rig-pa kun-gzhi'i bag la gnas te/ zhag gcig tu gnas-pa dang/ gnyis su gnas-pa dang/ gsum du gnas-pa dang/ dar-tsam yud-tsam la gnas-pa yang yod-do). During these seven days the purity of the clear lights will progressively unfold (bdun du dangs-ma rim gyis 'char zhes-pas) and on each of these days there will successively appear the white light, the green light, the red light, the blue light, and the yellow light, and so on. This period is said to extend symbolically over seven days, but it must be recalled that time in

the Bardo, like that in the dream state, is not the same as our linear and chronometric time experienced in the normal waking state. So, the actual duration of these visions is uncertain and depends on the individual.

Even so, the Buddha realms, the mandalas and the divine forms of the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas, will not appear in their perfection because one has had little familiarity with them in practice. Some symbols and some parts of the bodies of these divine figures may appear, but they are not complete. However, the sounds, the lights, and the rays persist and do not disintegrate (zhing-khams rdzogs-par 'char-ba med ces-pas/ goms-pa chung-ba'i stobs kyis/ sku dang dkyil-'khor rdzogs-par ni mi 'char/ sgra 'od zer gsum tsam zhig ni 'char-ro).

However, due to the presence of certain secondary conditions, that individual may come to attain liberation in the Bardo (rkyen gyis bar-dor grol-ba yod ces-pas). Such secondary causes (rkyen) are, for example, performing Phowa at the moment of physical death or having it done for one by a Lama before the occurrence of psychic death. Or if one has previously met a great master and have received teachings from him, and if one remembers these teachings after one has died, this will be very helpful. And also, if one is a good Tantric practitioner and has a vision of one's personal Yidam or meditation deity in the Bardo after death, who delivers prophesies and tells one what to do, this is very useful. Even better is to transform into one's Yidam and remain stable in that or to transfer one's consciousness into an illusion body (sgyu-lus) constructed from mind and subtle prana in previous practice of Tantric sadhana. [10] Also, Lamas may give instructions, as well as friends and relatives make dedications and puja offerings, that may be helpful to the recently deceased, such as are witnessed as part of Tibetan funeral ceremonies. All of these secondary causes may help the individual to remember the teachings and to recognize what is happening to oneself and about oneself. Or best, one may even remember to enter into the contemplation of the Natural State, but this case is rare if one is not much of a practitioner, and it depends much on faith and on prayers to the Gurus, as well as their blessings and those of the Yidam. Yet it is possible that such an individual may attain realization in the Bardo and find release. [11]

But if the individual does not meet with these secondary causes, then one will not find liberation at that time and various impure visions will arise in the Bardo (ma grol snyigs-ma'i snang-ba 'char zhes-pas). The five pure clear lights grow dull and weaken, and having gone into concealment or occultation, there then arise the manifestations of fire, water, earth, and air that represent the impure elements (de las ma grol na dangs-ma'i 'od lnga bag la zha nas/ snyigs-ma me chu sa rlung gi snang-ba 'di 'char-ro). Various impure karmic visions arise and one finds oneself in the Bardo of Existence. At first these visions may look very much like one's previous normal life. One's body will look like one's previous body. Sometimes one will feel happy, sometimes angry, sometimes full of desires, much as one did during one's previous lifetime. One is led through this labyrinth of worldly visions by the force of one's individual karma. Gradually these impure karmic visions begin to change and come to resemble much more one's future rebirth. [12]

Nevertheless, one may also see pure visions in the Bardo of Existence (srid-pa'i bar-dor dag-snang mthong zhes-pas), due to the power of one's white karma. These pure visions arise from the sounds, lights, and rays. This is especially the case if one has been a Tantric practitioner. If through one's previous practice one has realized pure visions, such as seeing one's Yidam face to face, even though one does not remain perfectly in the Natural State, one's devotion, good intentions, and good karma can lead to rebirth in a higher destiny among the Devas or humans. Receiving teachings from the masters there and practicing anew in that future lifetime, one will come to quickly liberate from this continuum of transmigration into places of fortunate rebirth. And in such places, having prolonged there one's ripened positive karma, one comes ultimately to liberation (gnas bzang rgyud nas myur du thar zhes-pas/ de la dag-pa'i gnas su rgyud de/ las kyi 'phro 'thud nas thar-ro).

B2. The Process of Delusion

However, for those ordinary individuals who lacked access to the gateway of the instructions for Dzogchen, they do not even come to recognize the clarity of the Natural State (gdams-pa'i sgo med gang-zag rnams/ gnas-lugs gsal yang ngo mi shes zhes-pas). At the time when the body and the mind separate at death, they find themselves in the Bardo and do not even recognize the Clear Light that represents the clear luminosity of the Natural State when it is without any obscurations or veilings (gdams-ngag gi sgo ru gtan

nas ma zhugs-pa rnams ni/ lus sems bral nas 'od-gsal gyi ngang la gnas-pa'i tshe/ gnas-lugs sgrib g.yogs med-par gsal yang ngo mi shes-pa'o). Such individuals are led onward through the psychic landscapes of the Bardo by their impure karmic visions and are driven relentlessly onward by the winds of karma. These visions are perceived as being real and as manifestations due to another, that is, they come from causes outside of oneself (snang-ba gzhan-snang bden-par mthong zhes-pas). Finding themselves in the Bardo of the Clear Light, they do not even recognize these three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, to be their own self-manifestations, but think that these visions exist externally and outside one's own mind-stream ('od gsal gyi bar-do la sgra 'od zer gsum shar yang rang-snang du ma shes te/ pha-rol na sang-ba rang rgyud-pa zhig yod-par mthong-ngo). Thinking them to be real and substantial, they sometimes feel angry and sometimes feel desirous with regard to them. In any event, they inevitably pursue and follow after these phantom images and loose their way, as in a dense trackless forest. These false and tempting visions lure them again into rebirth within Samsara. Falling once more under the dominion of the kleshas, the passions or negative emotions, they again come to create the causes of rebirth. They affix the seals of delusion and so continue to wander in Samsara ('khrul-pa'i rgyar tshud 'khor-bar 'khyams zhes-pas).

And thus the commentary concludes that this Boundary between liberation and delusion is very special and exceedingly important. Therefore, the fortunate individual who possesses the good fortune to have received the Dzogchen teachings should come to a clear and definitive decision regarding the Natural State while one is yet alive (de phyir skal-ldan dmar thag-bcad ces-pas/ grol-ba dang 'khrul-pa gnyis khyad-par che-ba'i phyir/ skal-ldan gyi gang-zag gis dus da-lta nas dmar thag-chod-par bya'o).

[This commentary to the translation has been composed by Vajranatha, John Myrdhin Reynolds, Holte, Denmark, November 1997.]

NOTES

Notes to the Introduction

[1] The original block-prints of the present collection of Tibetan texts from the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud cycle were brought out of Tibet by Lopon Tenzin Namdak from his monastery of Menri (sman-ri) in Tsang province when he fled his native land. These were subsequently published in India by Dr. Lokesh Chandra as History and Doctrine of Bon-po Nispanna-Yoga, International Academy of Indian Culture, Sata-Pitaka Series Indo-Asian Literatures, volume 73, New Delhi 1968.

[2] For the traditional hagiographies of Tapihritsa and Gyerpungpa, see my Space, Awareness, and Energy: An Introduction to the Bonpo Dzogchen Teachings from Zhang-zhung, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca NY, forthcoming.

[3] See Christopher Beckwith, The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1987, pp. 3-36.

[4] According to Lopon Tenzin Namdak. See his book g.Yung-drung bon gyi bstan-pa'i 'byung khungs nyung bsdus, Kalimpong 1962.

[5] See Beckwith, op. cit.

[6] For the traditional hagiography of Tonpa Shenrab from the gZer-myig, see Helmut Hoffman, The Religions of Tibet, George Allen & Unwin, London 1961, pp. 84-110, and also Richard Gard and Sangye Tendar, The Twelve Deeds: A Brief Life Story of Tonpa Shenrab, the Founder of the Bon Religion, LTWA, New Delhi 1995.

[7] See my Yungdrung Bon: The Eternal Tradition (Tibetan Translation Project, 1994). This publication contains a few chapters from a larger work in progress intended to serve as a general introduction to the Bon tradition.

[8] See Beckwith, The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia, ibid. Beckwith has suggested that the Tibetan term bon derives from the Iranian word bwn, meaning "Dharma," in the Sogdian texts from Central Asia. This word is also found as an element in the title of a Zoroastrian text on cosmology, the Bundahishn, which was composed in Pahlavi or Middle Persian. On the derivation of the term bon from the Tibetan verb 'bond-pa, see Geza Uray, "The Old Tibetan Verb Bon," in Acta Orientalia Hungarica 17, Budapest 1964, pp. 323-334. In the Zhang-zhung language, the word corresponding to the Tibetan bon is gyer, which, taken into Tibetan, comes to mean 'a chant," and as a verb gyer-ba means "to chant." Presummably in ancient times this was one of the principal functions of a Bonpo priest.

[9] See David Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors, Serindia Publications, London 1987, and see Helmut Hoffman, The Religions of Tibet, op. cit. Also see Namkhai Norbu, Drung, Dreu and Bon, LTWA, Dharamsala 1995. Elsewhere I consider the relationship of Tibetan Shamanism to the spiritual teachings of Bon in my forthcoming book, The Way of the Garuda, Wisdom Publications.

[10] See Yungdrung Bon, op. cit.

[11] See David Snellgrove, The Nine Ways of Bon, Oxford University Press, London 1967; especially pp. 24-123.

[12] See Snellgrove, The Nine Ways of Bon, op. cit., and Hoffman, The Religions of Tibet, op. cit. Also my own forthcoming book, The Way of the Garuda will deal with many of these aspects of Tibetan Bonpo Shamanism. The soul of the deceased is nowadfays designated by the Buddhist term Namshe (rnam-shes, rnam-par shes-pa, literally "discursive consciousness"). It is this Namshe which transmigrates from lifetime to lifetime. It is this Namshe that departs the physical body at the time of death and undergoes the various afterdeath experiences of the Bardo. Embodied at that time in a subtle mind-made body known as a Gandharva or smell-eater (dri-za), it unites with sperm or white element of the future father and the ovum or red element of the future mother precisely at the moment of conception.. But properly speaking, in terms of Buddhist psychology, this Namshe is not a substance or entity, but rather a process-- an ever-flowing ever-changing stream of consciousness (Skt. vijnana-santana, shes-rgyud), which is never the same monent to moment. Its contents are constantly changing. Nevertheless, it does possess a kind of individual existence, much like a river flowing through many different landscapes. This river and its waters are in constant flux, and yet in another sense, it is all the same river.

[13] See Edwin Bernbaum, The Way to Shambhala: A Search for the Mythical Kingdom beyond the Himalayas, Anchor Press/ Doubleday, New York 1980.

[14] See David Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson, A Cultural History of Tibet,, George Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1968.

[15] The story of the conflict and the accommodation between Trisong Detsan and Gyerpungpa is told in the text from the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud collection entitled rDzogs-pa chen-po zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud kyi bon ma nub-pa'i gtan-tshigs, "The Reason Why the Bon of the Dzogpa Chenpo Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud did nor Decline," in Lokesh Chandra, op. cit., pp. 259-267. A portion of this text has been translated in Snellgrove and Richardson, A Cultural History of Tibet, op. cit. The entire text is translated in my Space, Awareness, and Energy, Snow Lion, Ithaca 1999.

[16] Jalu ('ja'-lus) is the Rainbow Body and Jalupa ('ja'-lus-pa) is one who has realized the Rainbow Body at death. The rainbow is a symbol of bridging of the two realms of the sacred and the profane, as for example, the Chinvat bridge in Zoroastrian eschatology, and the Bifrost bridge in Old Norse mythology, linking the human world, Midgard, and the world of the gods, Asgard.

[17] For the hagiographies of Tapihritsa and Gyerpungpa, see my Space, Awareness, and Energy: An Introduction to the Bonpo Dzogchen Teachings from Zhang-zhung, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca NY, forthcoming.
[18] John Myrdhin Reynolds, Self-Liberation through seeing with Naked Awareness, Station Hill Press, Barrytown 1989.
[19] The great Italian Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci, on the basis of two medieval Tibetan texts, located the country of Uddiyana (u-rgyan) in the small Swat valley in modern Pakistan. However, descriptions of this country in old texts, as well as some inscriptions, would place Uddiyana in Eastern Afghanistan. See my The Golden Letters, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca NY 1996.

Notes to the Commentary on Six Essential Points

[1] See my The Six Lamps of the Heart of Enlightenment (forthcoming from Snow Lion).
[2] The myth of the Fall of humanity from a pre-existing Paradise or state of perfection and wholeness of being is not only found in the Book of Genesis in the Hebrew Bible, but is an extremely widespread mythic motif in cultures throughout the world. Even quite remote tribes, living an extremely simple and primitive lives as hunters and gathers, possess such myths. On the myth of the Fall from the standpoint of the History of Religions and the consequent nostalgia for Paradise, see Mircea Eliade, "Nostalgia for Paradise: Symbolism of the centre and the ritual approach to immortality," in Parabola 1, no. 1, New York 1967, pp. 6-15; as well as his Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism, Harvill Press, London 1961, chapter 1: Symbolism of the Center, pp.27-56.

In Buddhistic terms, the Fall is due to a primordial ignorance or lack of awareness (ma rig-pa, Skt. avidya), rather than to an act of willful disobedience on the part of the original ancestor of humanity, as is the usual interpretation of the Biblical myth. In the Buddhist Myth of Genesis recorded in the Vinaya and elsewhere, following upon the physical evolution of the planet earth, humanity collectively forgot its celestial origins in the Brahmaloka when most of its members tasted the film of protoplasmic substance forming on the surface of the seas of the new born planet. Thereupon, by identifying themselves with this organic substance, these streams of consciousness fell into generation and entered into a renewed cycle of transmigration. Their inherited karmic structures from their existences in a previous universe, kept latent in their collective unconscious, then germinated and programmed the future biological evolution of this planet. Some mystics in their transpersonal experiences can remember their pre-existence as bodies of light in the Brahmaloka, as is suggested by the Buddha Shakyamuni in the Triveda Sutra, and so on. See the Appendix in my Self-Liberation through Seeing with Naked Awareness, Station Hill Press, Barrytown NY 1989, pp.96-103.
[3] See The Six Lamps of the Heart of Enlightenment (forthcoming).
[4] This is a term coined by Eliade. See especially Mircea Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, Meridian Books, New York 1963.
[5] See Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, Oxford University Press, London 1923.
[6] For a list of the one hundred Peaceful and Wrathful Deities (zhi khro, zhi khro lha tshogs), see the translations of the Bar-do thos-grol in W.Y. Evans-Wentz, The Tibetan Book of the Dead, Oxford University Press, London 1927, and Francesca Freemantle and Chogyam Trungpa, The Tibetan Book of the Dead, Shambhala, Berkeley CA 1975, and especially Detlef Ingo Lauf, The Secret Doctines of the Tibetan Books of the Dead, Shambhala, Boulder CO 1977.
[7] For a popular introduction to Jung's theory of the archeypes, see C.G. Jung, Man and His Symbols, Doubleday, New York 1964, and for my critique of some of his remarks regarding Dzogchen, see the Appendix to my Self-Liberation through Seeing with Naked Awareness, op. cit..
[8] See especially Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion, Harcourt, Brice & World, New York 1957, pp. 8-113.
[9] It is indeed problematic to see how any system of ethics can be erected upon such a metaphysical base, although many modern philosophers have tried over the last few hundred years to do so. With respect to this, see Bertrand Russell, "A Free Man's Worship," in Mysticism and Logic, Allen & Unwin, London 1917.
[10] On the intrieguing parallels of Gnosticism with modern nihilism and existentialism, see Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion: The Message of an Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity, Beacon, Boston 1963.
[11] On the function of myth in general, see Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality, Harper & Rowe, New York 1963. And on the sacred and myth as narrative, see Paul Ricoeur, Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination, Fortress press, Minneapolis 1995.
[12] This concern of the Brahman priests of India with Dharma defining the social order has its parallels in the work of the French sociologist Emile Durkheim. His distinction between the sacred and the profane became widely accepted in French intellectual circles. For Durkheim the sacred is fundamentally social and reflects what principally concerns the clan or the tribe, whereas the profane only concerns the individual human being. Although the symbols and rituals which embody the sacred in human existence appear to speak of a supernatural order or higher reality, they in fact serve to make individuals aware of their social duties and obligations by personifying the collective, whether the clan or the tribe, as their totem god. Mircea Eliade, himself strongly influenced by his French education although he was a Rumanian by birth, saw the sacred as a reality in its own terms,

one that could not be reduced to something else, whether social or economic, and in this he followed Rudolf Otto. The sacred is not just a way to symbolize and depict the social reality that transcends the individual. Like the English Anthropologists Taylor and Frazer, Eliade conceives of religion as pre-eminently the belief in a supernatural reality inhabited by divine beings. These beings are not merely personifications of social structures and forms, but possess an independent reality and enter into a dialectical relationship with human society.
[13] I have dealt with the question of the Buddhist assimilation of local pagan deities to some extent in my publication Wicca, Paganism, and Tantra, Vidyadhara Publications, San Diego 1995. Moreover, the deep inner connections between Christianity and Mahayana Buddhism, which are both conceptual and structural, as well as possibly historical, I deal with in a future publication in the same series entitled Buddha, Christ, and Meditation. Also on this question, see Elaine Pagels, The Gnostic Gospels, Vintage Books, New York 1989, and also the essay be Edward Conze, "Buddhism and Gnosis," reprinted in Robert Segal (ed), The Allure of Gnosticism, Open Court, Chicago 1995, pp. 173-189.
[14] See my Self-Liberation through Seeing with Naked Awareness, op. cit.
[15] In general, one could say that Samsara or conditioned existence corresponds to the Heimarmene, the domain of fate in Gnosticism, which is ruled over by the Archons or planetary powers. These Archons are personifications of the passions or negative emotions that afflict the human soul, what the Buddhists call the kleshas. But these powers represent a deficient and imperfect reflection in the world below of a higher spiritual order, the Pleroma or Fullness, that is totally transcendent to this lower order of being. The Pleroma would correspond to the vision of Nirvana as a transcendent archetypal spiritual order in the perspective of both Mahayana Sutra and Tantra. I have delineated the conceptual and structural similarities, as well as the historical connections of Buddhism with Gnosticism in my unpublished monograph, Mystical Illumination in Gnosticism and Buddhist Tantra. The connection between Mahayana Buddhism and Gnosticism was also a concern of my own mentor, Edward Conze. See his essay, "Buddhism and Gnosis," op. cit.
[16] The Gnostic structure of Mahayana Buddhism and Tantra is elucidated in more detail elsewhere. See the above notes.
[17] These five Gnoses, often wrongly called wisdoms in the Western literature on Buddhism, are the gnosis of emptiness (stong-pa'i ye-shes), the mirror-like gnosis (me-long ye-shes), the gnosis of sameness (mnyam-nyid ye-shes), the discriminating gnosis (sor-rtog ye-shes), and the gnosis that accomplishes (bya-grub ye-shes). In Buddhist texts, this first gnosis is usually known as the gnosis of the Dharmadhatu (chos-dbyings ye-shes). On the technical distinction between gnosis or primordial awareness (ye-shes) and wisdom (shes-rab) as a higher intellectual faculty, see my The Golden Letters, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca NY 1996, pp. 121-125.
[18] See Appendix to my Self-Liberation through Seeing with Naked Awareness, op. cit.
[19] For this reason, ignorance or avidya (ma rig-pa) is listed as the first link or factor among the twelve links (Skt. nidana) of the wheel of interdependent origination (rten-'brel, Skt. pratitya-samutpada). This mode of interdependent cyclical existence is graphically represented by the Bhavachakra or Wheel of Becoming (srid-pa'i 'khor-lo), generally painted on the wall of the portico of every Tibetan temple. It is a glyph or a graphic representation of the basic teaching of the
~ this diagram on the ground with grains of rice in order to demonstrate certain key-points of his teaching to his chief disciple Ananda, it is said that centuries later the master Nagarjuna added the symbolic images to it. The archaic formula for interdependent origination, found in the Pali scriptures and elsewhere, states "When this arises, then that arises." Thus when ignorance (ma rig-pa) arises, then karmic formations ('du-byed, Skt. samskarah) arise," and so on. The twelve links of this causal chain extend over more than a single lifetime and there exist a number of interpretations of the significance of the chain and its individual links in the Abhidharma literature. For the Theravadin interpretation of the process according to Buddhaghosa (c. 500 CE), see Edward Conze, Buddhist Meditation, op. cit.

The real significance here is that, from the Buddhist viewpoint, consciousness and the self both represent processes that lack any fixed essence or inherent existence, processes that are ever-changing and transforming like the current of a river. The contents of the river is changing from moment to moment with the flow of the current, and yet it is the same river in a conventional sense. They are processes rather than being fixed self-identical entities or substances, or even structures. In terms of the phenomenological approach of Buddhist psychology, there does not exist some entity, substance, or structure called a self or an ego (bdag-med), but what is actually present in the stream of consciousness at any particular moment are the five skandhas or aggregates phung-po lnga). Literally skandha means a heap or an aggregate, but in fact they are not five collections of things, but five quite complex interacting processes whose emergent result is mental life. Properly speaking, each skandha, which is conditioned and compounded, is not a static structure, but a process in flux-- sensations, feelings, perceptions, impulses (both emotional and intellectual), and states of consciousness. They are like the sparkling reflections of sunlight on the surface of a rapidly moving stream. Instead of positing a self which appropriates various different experiences as its own, the psychology of the Buddhist Abhidharma advocates an introspective analytical meditation where each experience is analyzed into its component skandhas, so that there is no necessity to even speak of a self. For example, take an experience such as a tooth ache. First there is the sensation

coming from the tooth and the jaw. Then there is a feeling reaction to that sensation which is painful. Following that there is a perception of the experience as a whole, now correlated with memories of previous tooth aches, that this painful sansation is indeed a tooth ache. Next there is an impulse or emotional reaction of anger that arises in response to the painful sensation and the intention of rushing off to the dentist to seek relief. And finally there is the complex of states of consciousness that ties all these processes together in awareness.

On Buddhism in general as process psychology, see John Pickering (ed), The Authority of Experience: Essays on Buddhism and Psychology, Curzon, Surrey 1997.

[20] For a general application of meditation on the five skandhas, see Edward Conze, Buddhism: Its Essence and Development, Harper Torchbook, New York ____ and his Buddhist Meditation, George Allen & Unwin, London 1956. Also, on consciousness and the self as processes rather than as substances, see John Pickering (ed), op. cit., Chapter 7: "Selfhood is a Process," pp.149-169.

[21] This very unfindability (mi rnyed) of mind and the ego is a key-point in the direct introduction to the Natural State. On this, see my The Golden Letters, op. cit., p. 75.

[22] The cosmic "rat race" is depicted graphically in Buddhist terms as the Wheel of Becoming. Although this cycle of incessant becoming is beginningless, as a circle is, conventionally it is said that the process commences with Avidya-nidana, the factor of ignorance. But this ignorance, as stated previously, is not merely a lack of knowledge regarding some fact or another, but represents a diminishing of the fullness of awareness and the fullness of being. But this occurs not on a conscious and cognitive level, but at the most basic existential level. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to get at this fundamental level of existential ignorance which is built into our very existence, except when one arrives at the Boundary encountered after death, as explained in the Dzogchen texts. When interdependent origination is elucidated according to the Sutra system, as for example, in the writings of Buddhaghosa, normally the weakest point in the cycle where it is most likely for one to break out of this trap, is the juncture between the links of desire and attachment. One may experience a desire as an impulse rising into consciousness, but then one has the opportunity to pause for a moment and to choose whether or not to identify with it and become attached to that desire, appropriating it, and acting impulsively to fulfill it. For example, there is the desire one might feel for a chocolate or another sweet. When the desire arises, one can pause and think again about this desire for a sweet because it is so fattening. This is why the Sutra system puts such an emphasis on the practice of renunciation as being the proper path to attain spiritual liberation. The emphasis is placed on ethical and ascetic behavior, that is to say, not doing harm or injury to others and not indulging in the pleasures of the flesh, but radically simplifying one's way of life by means of the monastic discipline. But this is not the method of Dzogchen as such. Dzogchen goes immediately to the deepest ontological level, this existential ignorance, and proceeds to sever Samsara at its root. The different spiritual paths to enlightenment, each valid in its own terms, correspond to the three dimensions of human existence of body, speech or energy, and mind. These may be tabulated as follows:

Sutra	Path of Renunciation	Higher Morality	body
Tantra	Path of Transformation	Higher Meditation	speech
Upadesha	Path of Self-Liberation	Higher Wisdom	mind

In this classification, Upadesha refers to Dzogchen. See Namkhai Norbu, The Crystal and the Way of Light: Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen, Arkana Penguin Books, London 1993.

[23] In the Zurvanist theology of later Zoroastrianism, which appears to have been especially wide spread in the Sassanian empire of Iran during the early Christian era until the rise of Islam in the seventh century, the texts speak of a single ground of existence called Zurvan Akarana, or infinite time, out of which emerged the twin deities Ohrmazd and Ahriman. The one embodied the principles of light and order and goodness, while the other embodied darkness and chaos and evil. The latter twin, Ahriman, the personification of the shadow side of existence, arose from a doubt in the mind of Zurvan or God. The conflict between these two opposed spirits or principles, led to the creation of our world, which is known as "the time of limited duration," because it consists of twelve millennia during which the present world exists. Ohrmazd, as the principle of light, possessed wisdom and foreknowledge, and so he knew beforehand of the coming conflict with his twin brother. But Ahriman possessed only knowledge of the past and did not known the future, so when he attacked the realm of his brother, he did not know he was destined to loose the cosmic battle after the passage of many millennia. Thus, as the good spirit, Ohrmazd devised a plan to ensure his brother's defeat. He created the prototype of our present world as a perfectly ordered realm that was of light and of a purely spiritual nature. This perfect world endured for some three thousand years when it was attacked from outside the cosmos by the evil spirit Ahriman, emerging from the outer darkness because of his envy of the beauty of the light. Ohrmazd then created the first human being, the Archetypal Man known as Gayomart, who went forth into battle at the boundary of the known universe against the demonic force of darkness and chaos led by Ahriman. After a fierce battle, Gayomart was defeated and shattered into a vast multitude of tiny sparks of light. These sparks are now imprisoned within bodies of flesh known as human beings. Out of his envy for the beautiful work of his brother, Ahriman then attempted to construct a replica in matter of the celestial prototype created in light by Ohrmazd. This process occupied the second period of three thousand years.

Thus, the universe has fallen from the original creation of pure spirituality and light and has become a mixed world where the opposing principles of light and darkness, or good and evil, struggle and contend for supremacy. This represents our present time of travail. But at the end of a period of six thousand years, the triumph of Ohrmazd and the forces of light is assured. Those human spirits who have rejected the darkness and have chosen the light will become liberated and Gayomart will become united and whole again. Ahriman will be defeated by the forces of light and will be expelled into the outer darkness beyond the ordered cosmos forever. Then there will occur a purifying fire that sweeps the world and destroys all sinners who remain, followed by a general resurrection of all humanity and universal renovation or recreation of the world, known as the Frashkart. The world again becomes an unspoiled Paradise as it was in the time of the beginning before it was corrupted and degraded by the onslaught of Ahriman and humans will once more become purely spiritual beings of light, united with their celestial souls or Fravarti. And since the time of limited duration is now completed, this renewed condition of Paradise will be everlasting.

The impact of this Zoroastrian eschatology upon post-exilic Judaism and even more on the development of Christianity has been well documented. The similarities with Christian eschatology are obvious. The basic Zoroastrian myth of God creating two spirits who, because they possess free will, the one chooses good and the light, while the other chooses evil and the darkness, is found in the Gathas or hymns which can be clearly attributed to the Magian prophet Zarathushtra or Zoroaster himself (c. 700 BC). This same myth exactly reappears in the Dead Sea Scrolls. See R.C. Zaehner, The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism, G.P. Putnam, New York 1961, pp. 193-248..

Moreover, a number old pre-Buddhist Bonpo texts translated from the Zhang-zhung language, such as the Srid-pa mdzod-phug, appear to reflect this Zurvanist myth and theology. Zurvanism and Bon are both ultimately monistic, tracing the creation of these two opposing spirits to a single source. They postulate a single Ultimate Reality, whether eternity in the case of Iran or infinite space in the case of Tibet, out of which the dualities emerge that then work out their dialectic during the course of a finite history. In Bon, especially in the old pre-Buddhist myths, these two principles of light and darkness are known as Ye and Ngam and, accordingly, on one side are arrayed the gods (lha) and on the other side are arrayed the demons (bdud).

In contrast, Manicheanism, the religion established by the Parthian prophet Mani (3 cen CE) is radically dualistic. Unlike orthodox Zoroastrianism, which regarded the world as basically the creation and work of Ohrmazd, the good God of Light, only to be later spoiled and corrupted by the Devil, Ahriman, Mani came to associate the world in general and matter in particular with the principle of evil and darkness as such. On one side were ranged God, light, order, spirit, and good and on the other side were ranged the Devil, darkness, chaos, matter, and evil. Moreover, Mani took the evil principle, Ahriman or the Devil, not as some creature created by God, but as a totally independent principle and a separate substance altogether. Whereas in the original Gathas of Zoroaster, as well as in Judaism and Christianity, the Devil is not an independent deity, but a mighty spirit created by God who, by virtue of possessing free will, has chosen to do evil. Only because of God's permission has he been able to work his evil ways for a limited period of time. Nevertheless, over the centuries many Christians have allowed themselves to fall into a quasi-Manichean stance, allowing the Devil to truly reign as the God of this World, and who acts, as the tempter of humanity, almost as if he is an independent deity with his own agenda, even though he will ultimately be defeated at the end of time in accordance with the original Zoroastrian scenario. Such a radically dualistic Manichean mentality is clearly visible in the Calvinist theology of American Protestant Fundamentalism, for example.

[24] Certain Jewish Rabbis, and some Muslim writers also, assert that there is an angel and a devil born together with each human being. Much the same idea appears in the Old Bon. This god or angel (lha) and this demon or shadow (bdud) are born together (lhan-skyes) with the individual soul. Over the course of one's lifetime, these two spirits contend for the soul of that human being, the one guiding the individual along the path to good and righteousness, leading to ultimate salvation, and the other tempting the individual on to the path to self-indulgence, violence, and ultimate damnation. Thus, the real source of evil is not an external Devil or Satan as a primordial demonic power, or the result of some error or sin of the first ancestor of humanity, but is born within each human soul as such. This demon represents the shadow side of the soul. On this question, see C.G. Jung, Jung on Evil, Murray Stein (ed), Princeton University Press, Princeton 1995.

[25] It is now known that in the time of Christ and in the early Christian centuries, there existed a flourishing colony of Indian merchants in Alexandria in Egypt. Most of these Indians appear to have been Buddhists and Clement of Alexandria (2 cen. CE), who established the first Christian school in that city, referred to them as Indians who worshipped the god Boudo, who is none other than the Buddha. In the biography of the Greek philosopher Plotinus, who himself was born in Upper Egypt and who lived in Alexandria, he is said by his chief disciple Porphyry to have been a student of Ammonius Saccus. The latter, in turn, was said to have studied in Alexandria with certain Indian teachers of philosophy, presumably Buddhist. It is known that several centuries before the time of Plotinus (3 cen. CE), the great Indian Buddhist emperor Ashoka sent delegations of Buddhist monks to the leading Hellenistic kings in the West, who were the successors of Alexander the Great. This included Ptolemey in Egypt. There is evidence that the Therapeutae, a spiritual monastic community living to the south of Alexandria, which was referred to in the writings of Philo and Josephus, and

which had close connections with the Jewish community in Alexandria, may not have been Jewish at all, but Buddhist. Some scholars would even derive the name of this monastic community, Therapeutae, which is not a Greek word in origin, from the Indian name Theravada. This would suggest a Buddhist impact, as well as the Zoroastrian one indicated above, on post-exilic Judaism. And more especially, on the development of Christianity and the teachings of Jesus as expressed, for example, in Q and in the Gospel of Thomas. On this question, see Elaine Pagels, The Gnostic Gospels, op. cit.; Burton Mack, The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins, Harper Collins, San Francisco 1993; and Elmar Gruber and Holger Kersten, The Original Jesus: The Buddhist Sources of Christianity, Element, Shaftesbury UK 1995.

In the same way, it now would appear that Ammonius Saccus may have been deeply influenced by Indian Buddhist teachings and passed this on to Plotinus. Although he placed himself squarely in the Platonic tradition, the basis of Plotinus' philosophy had a different agenda. He expressed a keen desire to journey to India in order to search out the wisdom of the Indians and thus he set out in the train of the army of the emperor Gordian when the latter invaded Persia. But this attempt to repeat the exploits of Alexander the Great was in vain and the emperor was defeated. Plotinus escaped this disaster and journeyed onward to Rome where he established his own philosophical school. The relationship of Plotinus' philosophy, now called Neo-Platonism, to Buddhist ideas has not as yet been much investigated, although comparisons of Neo-Platonism with Advaita Vedanta have been attempted. See J.F. Staal, Advaita and Neo-Platonism, University of Madras, Madras 1961. And on Buddhist ideas and Western philosophy in general, see Edward Conze, Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies: Selected Essays, University of South Carolina press, Columbia SC 1968, pp. 210-228.

[26] The Mother is the Kunzhi, the Son is Rigpa, and from their inseparability arises Tsel or energy. These three concepts are elucidated in some detail in the lTa-khrid, or "The Explanation of the View (of Dzogchen," by Druchen Gyalwa Yungdrung (Bru-chen rGyal-ba g.yung-drung, 12 cen.) This text is found in his collection entitled rGyal-ba phyag-khrid, and it represents the principal practice manual and commentary (phyag khrid) for the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud cycle. See my Space, Awareness, and Energy, forthcoming.

[27] This modern condition of the sky in say, Los Angeles or Mexico City, and many other cities in the contemporary world, trulyrepresenting the spread of urban industrial civilization over the surface of the earth, is perhaps suggestive or symbolic of the corrosive influence of much modern materialistic and reductionist thought itself that would pollute the spirit.

[28] The famous Nyingmapa Lama Chatral Rinpoche once said in an oral communication that the fear of emptiness is the beginning of madness. In such a state, one feels no boundaries or limitations or definitions or solid walls. There is no solid ground beneath one's feet. This experience of absolute freedom in space without any physical supports can be exhilarating, like flying through the open sky as a bird does. Or it can be disorienting and terrifying, inspiring both nausea and vertigo. Furthermore, instead of a sense of freedom and infinite possibilities, it can be experienced as a sense of emptiness, purposelessness, meaninglessness, as if one's existence were without foundation or roots. Lacking all purpose and meaning, this ultimately leads to depression, despair, and suicide. Life becomes simply unbearable. On these positive and negative senses of emptiness, especially as this relates to psychotherapy, see A.H. Almaas, The Void: A Psychodynamic Investigation of the Relationship between Mind and Space, Diamond Books, Berkeley CA 1986. In the Prasangika Madhyamika tradition, Shunyata or emptiness is treated in a rather negativistic, even nihilistic fashion, at least in the view of some writers on Dzogchen. But perhaps this is mostly a matter of emphasis, where Dzogchen looked to the positive significance of Shunyata as pure potentiality and intrinsic freedom, making all things possible, including the attainment of Buddhahood.

[29] The archetype of the Great Mother has both her positive, beatific, and nourishing side and her negative, terrible, and devouring side. She gives birth to the hero, who symbolizes ego consciousness, yet she threatens to devour and engulf him again as the great dragon-like monster emerging from the waters of the deep or from the mouth of the cave that leads beneath the earth. See Erich Neumann, The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype, Bollingen, Princeton 1972, and also Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, Bollingen, Princeton 1972.

[33] On the Great Transfer, of which the Bonpo Mahasiddha Tapihritsa, as well as Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra in the Nyingmapa tradition, are examples, see my The Golden Letters, ibid., p. 168.

Notes to the Commentary on the Four Wheels

[1] Samten G. Karmay briefly reviews the present text in his The Great Perfection: A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching of Tibetan Buddhism, Brill, Leiden 1988, pp. 203-205, where he states that this text belonging to the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud cycle is of special interest because of its conception of light as the source of the phenomenal world. How man views his relationship to the environment and the phenomenal world is elucidated within the framework of four short sections, each of which is named a wheel. He goes on to say that the concept of four wheels is of Tantric origin and, therefore, Indian, and so also is the notion of the Bardo. But the idea concerning the light that radiates from Rang shes-rig is peculiar to Bonpo texts. The lights which shine forth from the Primordial Base are here presented as the source of the phenomenal world, as well as of the transcendent state, that is to say, Samsara and Nirvana. This illustrates the Dzogchen philosophical conception of mind being capable of creating its own illusory world or releasing itself into its own former state of primordial purity. This conception expounded in the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud is

illustrated by a thangka found by Karmay in a ruined Bonpo monastery of sKyang-gtsang in Amdo in 1985. In the center of a white background is a yogi sitting in meditation position. From the crown of his head, whirling lights of five colors blaze upward and project visions of the enlightened state, representing the realm of Nirvana, whereas other lights radiate downward from various parts of his body, projecting images of the phenomenal world of Samsara.

However, the mind, which is the source of the five lights, is not the ordinary mind of the thought process, but the Nature of Mind, which is the Base for both Samsara and Nirvana. This may be seen from the translation of the contents of the first wheel. Moreover, the four wheels (Tib. 'khor-lo, wheel, cycle) do not refer to the familiar chakras of the Indian Yoga system, but to four cycles of teaching. Clearly the Bonpo system of the subtle channels and psychic energies, its mystical anatomy and physiology, is inspired by Indian Tantra and Yoga. But the particular Dzogchen system of light mysticism appears to this writer and some others also, to have Iranian connections, as for example, the five lights in Manicheanism. This suggests, as indeed the Bonpos themselves assert, that the Dzogchen teachings came from Tazik (stag-gzig), the Indo-Iranian border lands in Afghanistan and Central Asia. This does not, however, ignore Indian influences, for the Upanishads themselves speak of the antarajyoti or interior light resident in the heart. Moreover, the notion of an after-death experience or Bardo (Skt. antarabhava) is not unique to Buddhism, even though the notion is highly developed in Anuttara Tantra and in Dzogchen, both traditionally reputed to derive from Central Asian sources, that is to say, from the country of Uddiyana. See my The Golden Letters, Snow Lion, Ithaca 1996, pp. 177-286.

[2] The attachment in recent decades of most modern physicists and cosmologists to "the Big Bang" theory of the creation of the universe as opposed to, for example, "the continuous creation" proposed by Fred Hoyle, lies with the unconscious influence of Biblical myths and concepts on the thinking of most Westerners. Even when they are conscious atheists, the notions of God and creation intrude, if only to structure a theory of evolution that eliminates the necessity for a Creator God at the beginning of the whole process. The thinking of modern man is as much structured by myth and religion, and in the West this means pre-eminently the Biblical religion of the Judeo-Christian tradition, as that of ancient and medieval man. Nowadays, instead of speaking of the inexplicable actions of the gods and the spirits, we speak of the actions of the impersonal forces of nature, which yet remain as mysterious to us as the will of the gods was for the ancients. Or in terms of the individual, we speak of unconscious impulses and neuroses that are not under the control of the conscious ego. And as with Aristotle, we find it impossible to think of a beginningless series. There must be a first cause which is itself uncaused. We think that there must be an absolute beginning to things, an actual creation of the universe, even if there is no God to start things up and set them in motion. The Big Bang is just a primeval explosion with no cause and no explanation, although it had to have occurred because we think it must have occurred. Coming into being with this primeval explosion and being without any purpose, the universe then expands until a state of stasis or ultimate entropy is attained in accordance with the second law of thermodynamics. This represents the ultimate death of the universe, at state of absolute inertia and motionlessness. The universe has lived its long life without purpose and without meaning, coming inevitably to entropy-- where all will be cold, dark, and still, like a dessicated corpse devoid of life and consciousness. Such is the modern mechanistic view of reality, the universe, and man. All is without purpose and without meaning.

But the second law of thermodynamics only applies to the limited case of a closed system, such as the machines we now build of metal. The modern model of the universe since the time of Newton in the seventeenth century is that of the machine. The universe is like an intricate clock mechanism, wound up by the Big Bang, rather than by God, at the beginning of time and now gradually, inevitably, it is winding down. When all its springs are finally unwound, the wheels and the cogs will no longer turn and everything will come to a complete stop. We no longer have God to wind up the clock once more. But living beings are not machines, but organisms, and although they age with time, they do not simply move toward entropy, but reproduce themselves. They are open systems. In the same way, the universe as a whole is an open system and not a closed one in the post-modern view. A better model than the mechanistic would be the organic; it is as if the entire universe were one gigantic living organism. It is not a static entity, but a living process interacting with other universes. In the Buddhist view and in the Indian view generally, there exist an infinity of world-systems or universes, and the totality of this entire intricate interactive system is open and evolving. Energy can flow from one world-system to another. And like individual organic beings, entire universes die and are reborn. They manifest and unfold and evolve, only to disintegrate and dissolve once again, enfolding back into their source. This is all part of the universal process of life, change, death, and rebirth going on endlessly. This is the cyclical process called Samsara, within which we find cycles within cycles, an infinitude of individual variations. And yet, every individual process is linked together with the whole, an infinite multiverse of all universes, both actual and potential, pulsating with life. And this total process is itself beginningless. For the Buddhist and the Hindu, Samsara is beginningless. There has been no original creation out of nothing, no absolute beginning, although in relative terms individual organic beings and individual world-systems do come into existence, evolve, age, and eventually pass away, only to be reborn again.

On the Indian cosmology and its iconography in general, in both Hinduism and Buddhism, see Heinrich Zimmer, Myths and Symbols of Indian Art and Civilization, harper Torchbook, New York 1962. On time, both linear and cyclical see Mircea Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return: or Cosmos and History, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1971. The interrelationship of cosmology and the myths of creation to consciousness, spirituality, and the process of liberation and enlightenment, I deal with at some length in my work in progress, The Book of the Serpent. For a summery of David Bohm's views on the manifest universe or the explicate order and its unmanifest source, the implicate order, see Michael Talbot, The Holographic Universe, Harper Collins, London 1991. Also see Bohm, David, Wholeness and the Implicate Order, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1980.

[3] In general, in relation to Nirvana and Samsara, the Dzogchen texts speak of pure vision (dag snang) as against impure karmic vision (ma dag las snang). On this fundamental distinction between Nirvana and Samsara, the pure and the impure, the sacred and the profane, see the discussion in the preceding commentary. On the distinction between the sacred and the profane in general, see Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion, Harcourt, Brice & World, New York 1957, especially pp. 8-113.

[4] This motif of the arche or primordial principle giving birth to both light and darkness, both good and evil, is much like the myth of the primordial androgynous Iranian deity Zurvan who gives birth to both God (Ohrmazd) and the Devil (Ahriman), the twins of light and darkness respectively. God is born from Zurvan's good intentions and the Devil from his doubt or shadow side. Certain Christian writers, like the Armenian theologian Eznik, vigorously attacked this Zurvanist notion that the Highest God could also be responsible for the existence of evil. But if God is all goodness and light, how can he permit the existence of evil in the world? Generally, Christians attribute the origin of evil to the perverse nature of mankind (the myth of the Fall) or to the intervention of the Devil who experienced an even earlier Fall while being an archangel in heaven before the Fall of humanity. But in both cases, the Fall, and hence the origin of evil itself, was do to an act of free will-- disobedience to the ordinances of the Father and the prideful attempt to set oneself up as the equal of the Father. On the Zurvanist theology with Zoroastrianism, see R.C. Zaehner, The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism, op. cit., and R.C. Zaehner, The Teachings of the Magi, Allen & Unwin, London 1956. This question of the origin of evil and the shadow side of God equally fascinated C.G. Jung. See C.G. Jung, Jung on Evil, op. cit., and An Answer to Job, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1954; also in Collected Works, vol. 11, Bollingen series, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ 1968.

[5] On the sacred nature of the sky, see Mircea Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, Meridian Books, New York 1963.

[6] In Latin, fiat lux means "Let there be light!" In the creation myth found in Genesis I of the Hebrew Bible, the Ruach Elohim, or the spirit of God (masc.) moved like a wind across the dark waters of the deep of the primordial ocean (fem.). In Hebrew, tehom, "the deep," is cognate with Babylonian Tiamat, the name for the great female chaos dragon or serpent that dwells concealed in the deep waters of the primeval ocean. The young hero god, the Creator who brings order out of chaos, must first engage and subdue, even slay, this chaos dragon before the world as we know it can be brought into being-- that is, before we can have the ordered world of the cosmos. The mythic account found in Genesis I and composed by Jewish priests and scribes in Babylon during the Captivity, is clearly based on the Babylonian account of creation found in the Enuma Elish. In this latter work, the young hero god is called Marduk and he is elected by the other gods as their champion in order to fend off the great watery chaos dragon who threatens to devour them and end their conscious individual existence. Because Marduk slays the dragon and, indeed, creates the known universe out of her dismembered body, the gods in assembly joyously grant him kingship over them. Marduk then takes possession of the Tablets of Destiny and creates mankind from clay to be servants of the gods. In the Book of Genesis, this account based on the Babylonian original is prefaced to another earlier creation myth, one of Canaanite origin, which is now found as Genesis II. In Genesis I the name given to the hero Creator God who drives back the dark waters of chaos is Elohim. Although later, this epithet is interpreted as referring to an individual deity in accordance with the prophetic ideology of monotheism in the sixth and fifth centuries, the name its self is a Hebrew plural meaning "the gods."

It was this Creator God who uttered in the beginning these words, "Fiat lux! Let there be light!" This was a theological notion, creation by word, that came from Egypt rather than Babylon. In the Memphite Theology, the primordial Creator God, here called Ptah, conceives the idea of creation in his heart (mind) and then with his tongue he utters the words "Let there be!" And in this way all things and all the generations of gods and men are called into existence. However, there existed a number of different creation myths circulating in Ancient Egypt. In the Heliopolitan Theology associated with the ancient solar cult of On or Heliopolis in Middle Egypt, the texts speak of the first moment of creation when the brilliant solar disc of the young heroic sun god Atum first rose above Nun, the dark waters of chaos. This first dawn or first light occurring at the beginning of time before the creation of all the things of heaven and earth may be compared to the initial manifestation of the Clear light at the onset of the Bardo experience after the experience of the state of Shunyata. This Shunyata, which is also feminine in its nature, may be compared to the fecundative waters of the primordial ocean, out of which all things will emerge in their time, including the young God of

Light, who is the sun of Rigpa. The dark maternal watery principle gives birth to the light of consciousness at the time of the beginning, the first dawn of creation. Every sentient being experiences this with each passage through the Bardo. In the Dzogchen wisdom tradition, Shunyata or Kunzhi is said to be like the empty sky and as the Mother, it is feminine, whereas Rigpa or intrinsic Awareness as the Son is masculine and compared to the disc of the sun.

In my own view, the purpose of both myth and religion is to give meaning to human life here on earth, especially a higher spiritual meaning where human life and activity is related to everything else in the universe in symbolic terms. Dzogchen would have this creation of meaning occur at the most radical and existential level-- at the very moment of our final death, which is at the same time our re-emergence out of the state of Shunyata or pure potentiality, this being the moment of rebirth. With the onset of the Bardo, gazing into the Clear Light of Reality, Awareness comes to perceive the light which is actually its own projection and reflection. And in this chaotic display of rainbow lights, the presence of Awareness brings about a spontaneous emergence of order, whether sacred or profane, and creates meaning by way of the self-manifested images or holograms that represent Nirvana or Samsara.

This light of creation may be compared to the first rising of the disc of the sun Atum above the dark waters of chaos, known as Nun, in the Heliopolitan Theology of Ancient Egypt. On the Heliopolitan Theology, see Rundle Clark, Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt, Thames & Hudson, London 1959. On the Enuma Elish, the Memphite Theology, and the Heliopolitan Theology also, see Henri Frankfort, H.A. Frankfort, John Wilson, and Thorkild Jacobsen, Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth UK 1949. And on the symbolism of the Great Mother and her relationship to individualized consciousness, see Erich Neumann, The Great Mother, op. cit., as well as his Origins and History of Consciousness, vo. 1 & 2, Harper Torchbooks, New York 1954.

[7] The myths of creation in the Ancient Near East, such as the famous Enuma Elish of Babylon, had their parallels in Ancient India, where water also represented the base element out of which all things arose. But here, when considering the Tibetan Books of the Dead, water is a metaphor for something much more fundamental. The primeval waters of Vedic and Puranic myth becomes philosophically refined as the Shunyata of Buddhism. Water represents, as with the first Greek philosopher Thales, the arche or first principle out of which all things arise. I examine this question in more detail in relation to water and serpent symbolism in my forthcoming study The Book of the Serpent. On water symbolism in Indian myth and cosmology, see Zimmer, Myths and Symbols, etc., op. cit., Ananda Coomaraswami, Yakshas, Munshiram Manoharlal New Delhi 1971, and Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, op. cit.

[8] On dream yoga and dark retreat as preparation for death and the Bardo experience, see the second volume of this book, The Six Lamps of the Heart of Enlightenement. Also see my book, Namkhai Norbu: The Cycle of Day and Night, Station Hill Press, Barrytown 1987, as well as Namkhai Norbu and Michael Katz, Dream Yoga and the Practice of the Natural Light, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca NY 1992, and W.Y. Evans-Wentz, Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines, Oxford University Press, London 1935.

[9] On the Wheel of Life diagram in general, see Austine Waddel, The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism, Dover, New York 1972.

[10] See W.Y. Evans-Wentz, The Tibetan Book of the Dead, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1927. Also see Detlef Ingo Lauf, The Secret Doctrines of the Tibetan Books of the Dead, Shambhala, Boulder 1977, and especially on Bonpo symbolism, pp. 156-169.

[11] Kuntu Zangpo is the cause or the reason for Primordial Buddhahood (de ni kun tu bzang-po ye sangs-rgyas-pa'i gtan-tshigs-so). This is because, from the very beginning, He has understood and He has, therefore, never been tainted or mixed up in Samsara. For this reason, He has been called the First or the Primordial Buddha. In Western religious terms, He could be called the Supreme Being. But this notion of a Primordial Buddha should not be confused with Western-style Biblical monotheism or with some supposed theistic trend within the development of Buddhist thought itself. The concepts are quite different.

Even though Kuntu Zangpo understands and has been the Buddha or enlightened from the very beginning, He did not create Samsara. Unlike the Biblical God, He did not create the world by fiat and then mankind out of clay, by blowing his spirit into an earthen replica of Himself. The universe, or rather, the complex natural process called Samsara, was never created as part of some one's intention or plan, nor did it ever have an absolute beginning in time and history. Samsara is cyclical existence as such and it just goes on and on, endlessly circulating and revolving from beginningless time. It was not created or brought into existence with some prototypical historical event, such as a Big Bang. Rather, it is an ontological category, a mode of existence. But, in the relative sense, in terms of the psychogenesis of each individual stream of consciousness, one may speak of Samsara as having a relative beginning, as being created in the moment following psychic death when awareness reawakens at the onset of the Bardo experience. The Bardo of the Clear Light becomes effulgent with Nirvanic visions and the Bardo of Existence becomes flooded with Samsaric visions. Failing to recognize the real nature of these visions, the individual stream of consciousness, or Namshe (rnam-shes), once again re-enters the rebirth process (srid-pa). One becomes born again or re-born (yang srid). So, in this sense, for an individual sentient being, it may be said that Samsara has a beginning.

However, the visions of Samsara naturally and spontaneously arise out of the Nature of Mind, the Primordial State of the individual. These visions, which form the world as we know it, were not created by some transcendent God, nor are the Bardo visions inflicted upon the individual soul as reward or punishment by such a God. Rather, the particular aspect of these visions, whether blissful or terrifying, are determined by the process of the karmic inheritance of that individual. It is karma, an impersonal natural process, which guides and governs the evolution and unfolding of these visions that we call our world, and not some personality transcendent to it. Even though the clear lights in the Bardo arise of themselves, freely and spontaneously, without prior cause or design, it is the karmic process operative in the mind-stream of the individual that determines how these initial displays of chaotic lights are ordered and interpreted. In reply to the first question found in the Roman Catholic catechism, "Who made the world?" the wisdom teachings reply that it is karma which has made the world. In the most profound sense, we are the actual creators of our own reality. Outside, there is only space and light, but it is the intervention of mind that molds and transforms this into the reality of our world.

Kuntu Zangpo is not the God of Biblical theism who first creates the world, then mankind, then expels the first human beings from paradise for disobedience, punishes humanity with a great flood, lays down the law on a mountain, including moral and dietary rules, and favors one human group over all other nations. Kuntu Zangpo is not a monarch sitting on His throne at the summit of heaven, ruling over heaven and earth and dispatching his angels on various missions among mankind below, much like a worldly emperor. These mythological images do exist in Buddhism and Bon, where such roles are played by Brahma and Indra (actually generic titles)-- but theirs is considered a divine order that still belongs to the conditioned existence of Samsara. Brahma and Indra are among the Samsaric gods and, although well intentioned and righteous, they are not Buddhas or enlightened beings. They are sentient beings like ourselves, although much more powerful and wise and longer lived. When their accumulated stock of meritorious karma, which has led them into such an exalted rebirth, is exhausted, they too shall pass away and be reborn elsewhere.

Kuntu Zangpo is not such a god as they are. Rather, Kuntu Zangpo is the exemplar and the archetype of enlightenment, never having had a human existence in time and history. He did not work His way up through the evolutionary ranks from a mineral to a plant to an animal to a human being, then to a Bodhisattva, and finally to an enlightened Buddha, as did the various Nirmanakaya Buddhas who have appeared throughout the ages. Yet, because every sentient being, no matter how ignorant or deluded or degraded, participates in Kuntu Zangpo as the Dharmakaya-- harboring within one's breast a spark of His light, so to speak, that one has the possibility, the potentiality, even the destiny to realize that same state of Buddhahood or full enlightenment and liberation which He embodies. Even though the Dharmakaya is parceled out among an infinity of sentient beings throughout all times and all possible universes, its infinity and its plenitude is in no way diminished thereby. Kuntu Zangpo is not any less for the fact that, at the core of one's very own being, there is Kuntu Zangpo. He is the Bodhichitta, the principle of enlightenment, at the heart of existence. Buddhahood is both singular and universal, as well as being individual and infinite in numbers. It transcends and is not restricted by the logic of the excluded middle, of necessarily having to be either A or not-A. See the discussion of this question in terms of the Dharmakaya and the Rupakaya in the Appendix of my Self-Liberation through Seeing with Naked Awareness, ibid.

[12] The Archontic powers refer to the Archons or "rulers," that is, the planetary powers that dominate and rule man's fate according to Gnosticism and much of later Hellenistic and Roman philosophy. We are still familiar with them today as the seven planets of classical pre-modern astrology. The Babylonian or Chaldean science of astrology, which developed over the course of many centuries, came to read the fate of the king and the state in the omens and portents of the heavens, both astronomical and meteorological. The Greeks adopted this Semitic science and rendered it, the astronomical part, into a precise mathematical model of the movements of the heavenly bodies. In this way, they came to calculate horoscopes or natal charts for individuals, rather than just divine the fate of the city state. Although having been rendered with the Greeks into a scientific model of the cosmos, one having great predictive value, the Greeks kept the old divinatory significances associated with the planets, the signs of the zodiac, the aspects, and so on, attributed to them by the Babylonians or Chaldeans. This combination of scientific astronomy and divinatory astrology culminated in the Tetrabilios of Claudius Ptolemy of Alexandria, the classical compendium of Graeco-Chaldean astrology which is still the foundation of modern day astrology. This Chaldean science of astrology spread throughout the Hellenistic kingdoms following the conquest of Alexander the Great of the city of Babylon, which he made his own capital. And by Roman times this system of astrology had become almost universally accepted as the science of the day, just as since the seventeenth century Newtonian mechanics provided a model of the cosmos that became our accepted science in the West, at least until recently.

With the disintegration of the Greek polis or city-state, and the old temple city-states of the Ancient Near East as well, the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean world began to feel adrift and alienated. They felt little allegiance to the super-states of the Hellenistic kings that succeeded Alexander and to the later Roman emperors. They came to feel that fate was something that no longer represented the will of the gods, but was something malign and cruel that played havoc with men's lives. The old gods of Babylon, transferred to the heavens and given corresponding Greek

names, were no longer benevolent, but cruel or indifferent. They came to represent harsh, almost impersonal, forces of fate, imposing an inevitable destiny upon humanity on the earth below-- a fate that could be calculated in the majestic movements of the stars and planets, but could in no way be propitiated or resisted. A man's fate could be calculated from his natal horoscope, but he was powerless to overcome his lot. The Mystery Religions, such as Mithraism, offered one route for the individual to escape from one's astral fate allotted at birth, by way of initiation and the soul's ascent above the firmament and the domain of fate, wherefrom it will be liberated into a pure dimension of light and spirit. Christianity offered another path, either by rejecting the science of astrology altogether or by down-grading these planetary powers and subordinating them to the will of God. The Gnostic Movement in the first centuries of the Christian era went even further. The Gnostics looked to a transcendent realm of light and freedom, the realm of the Unknown God revealed by the Christ, located beyond the stars or astral powers that wrote the fate of men, both individually and collectively, in the heavens.

The world, actually the lower world which moved under the sway of these astral powers, principally seven in number, was not the creation of the Supreme Being, the Highest God, who dwells outside and beyond the cosmos, but of a lesser power, a lesser deity or archangel, a Demiurge (Gr. demiourgos), who was ignorant of this higher realm of light and believed himself to be the true Creator of the world. Variously known as Ialdabaoth, Saklas, Samael, even as Aion, and sometimes identified with the Planet Saturn, it was he who spoke to Adam and Noah and Moses in the Biblical account. He was a God of Law, at times just, but also a tyrant. And it was this Creator God, ignorant of his own true source, that who has kept humanity in ignorance and bondage in the world below. Thus, the way to salvation of the soul from the cruel hands of fate, from these astral powers collectively known as the Heimarmene, is not obedience to the Law of the tyrant, the lesser God who claims to be the creator, but the obtaining of the gnosis. Gnosis is a higher spiritual knowledge, a knowledge which liberates and sets one free. In essence, gnosis is the knowledge of who we really are-- from whence we have come and whither we go. This gnosis or knowledge is not a worldly knowledge about the things of this world, but represents a true self-knowledge. It is not discovered by reason or by science, but by a special revelation from above, one coming from the realm of light beyond the universe of fate, the Heimarmene, beyond the Hebdomad, the spheres of the seven planetary powers. Gnosis derives from a revelation brought by a savior figure (soter) who voluntarily descended from the transcendent realm of light into this world of darkness below. This savior had come in order to rescue the sparks of light imprisoned in human bodies of flesh and tormented by the minions of the astral powers. Christian Gnosticism identified this savior figure with Jesus Christ, whereas the Mithraists identified him with Mithra. In Mahayana Buddhism, this savior figure is the Buddha, as is made clear in the Saddharma-pundarika Sutra or Lotus Sutra, for example. In the cultural mix of Central Asia, the Indian figure of the ascetic Buddha and the divine princely Iranian figure of the god Mithra as the world-teacher and saviour merged and were assimilated. This gave rise to the splendrous and luminous image of Maitreya, the future Buddha who will come to liberate all humanity. Both names, Mithra and Maitreya, come from the same Indo-Iranian root meaning friendship and contract. The parallels of Gnosticism with Buddhism are very striking, especially with Mahayana Buddhism which, at least in part, originated in the northwest of the subcontinent, an area of mixed Indian and Iranian religious culture. There exists evidence for a strong Indian Buddhist presence in and around Alexandria in Egypt, even before the time of Christ. The possible Buddhist impact on the formation of the Gnostic Movement in the lifetime of Jesus of Nazareth, and his connections with it, have not yet really been investigated. But see Gruber and Kersten, The Original Jesus, ibid.

On the Archons or rulers of the planetary spheres who, according to the traditions of Gnosticism, control the fate of the individual human being here below, see Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity, Beacon Press, Boston 1963. In some Gnostic systems, each of the Archons, or planetary powers, embody and personify a particular passion or vice that afflicts the human soul. For example, Mercury rules avarice, Venus rules lust, Mars rules anger, and so on. As the soul, originally of a purely celestial and spiritual origin, descends through the respective planetary spheres to take up embodiment once more in the flesh of the earth, it becomes gradually garbed in these vestments of a planetary and passionate nature. Thus, the planets and their corresponding passions come to dominate the life of the soul here on earth.

In Buddhist terms, these Archons or rulers, who are the causes or movers of Samsara, are the kleshas or the emotional defilements. They appear to the deceased soul as the wrathful deities (khro-bo lha tshogs) when the Clear Light of the Dharmadhatu, in Gnostic terms the Pleroma, is not recognized. The chief of these wrathful deities in the Tibetan Book of the Dead is called the Buddha Heruka, who represents the higher or wisdom aspect of ignorance and confusion, Moha, which is the essence of ego attachment/aversion perverting all human emotions. The corresponding Bonpo deity is known as Tsochok (gTso-mchog). I have investigated this question of the relationship between Gnosticism and Mahayana Buddhism, especially Buddhist Tantra and Dzogchen, at greater length in my unpublished study Mystical Illumination in Gnosticism and Buddhist Tantra. This is also alluded to in a study by my own teacher. See Edward Conze, "Buddhism and Gnosis," reprinted in Robert Segal (ed), The Allure of Gnosticism, Open Court, Chicago 1995, pp. 173-189.

[13] In the Hindu tradition of the Brahmanas and the Puranas, the Creator God is known as Brahma. Indeed, the concept of Brahma in Hinduism and Buddhism may be compared to the concept of a Creator God in the Western Biblical tradition. But in Buddhism there is no single Creator God in an absolute sense. Rather, all sentient beings are the co-creators of the universe they now inhabit. This universe is the collective result of their various past karmas. In Buddhism, Brahma is a generic term and, as explained in the Vinaya, the Brahmajala Sutra, and elsewhere, that, in the distant past before the Fall into generation and physical embodiment on the surface of the earth from the celestial paradise of the Brahmaloka, all human beings were once Brahmas or purely spiritual beings, adorned with bodies of light, inhabiting the celestial heavens. See the Appendix to my Self-Liberation through seeing with Naked Awareness, op. cit., pp. 96-103.

Elohim is the name for God the Creator in the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament of the Bible. This Hebrew name is plural, meaning "the gods," whereas the singular form El was the name for the old Creator God in Canaanite mythology. By the time of king David (c. 1000 BC), the tribal god of the Hebrews, Yahweh, became identified, at least in the circles around David, with the Canaanite Creator God El Elyon, whose Jebusite priests controlled Jerusalem before the former conquered the city and made it his capital. With the rise of the Gnostic Movement around the time of Christ, the view of this Creator God depicted in the Book of Genesis of the Bible undergoes a radical re-evaluation. Although he is still regarded as the creator of the world and of the physical body of man, he is no longer the Supreme Being or the Highest God, but a lower power known as the Demiurge.

In the Buddhist Myth of Genesis, the Brahmas have fallen into generation and rebirth due to their ignorance, having forgotten that they were originally celestial beings of light and that they were the creators of the reality of the universe they now see around them. In a very direct sense, we, as human beings, create our own reality. The texts of Dzogchen elucidate this process in some detail. Again, in terms of the vocabulary of Western Occultism and Neo-theosophy, the Kamadhatu or Desire World embraces the physical, etheric, and astral planes, the Rupadhatu or Form World encompasses the various mental planes, and the Arupadhatu or Formless World refers to the various planes of cosmic consciousness attained in mysticism. The term Brahmas, in the plural form, properly applies to the various beings inhabiting the Rupadhatu or mental planes.

[14] On the sacred structure of space, see Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, op. cit. Also see Giuseppe Tucci, The Theory and Practice of the Mandala, op. cit.

[15] On Tibetan medicine, see Rechung Rinpoche, Tibetan Medicine, University of California Press, Berkeley CA 1973 and Theodore Burang, The Tibetan Art of Healing, Robinson & Watkins, London 1974.

[16] According to the traditional wisdom teachings, such as Dzogchen, modern man has become out of balance because he locates the center of his being not in the heart, but in the head or brain. Hence the modern excess of intellectuality and estrangement from the feelings and the emotions that derive from the heart and the body. Also, modern science tends to take the senses, which are principally located in the head, as the only source of valid knowledge. The wisdom of the heart is dismissed as mere subjectivity and a block to objective scientific knowledge.

Also, some modern spiritual people, of my acquaintance in California, following versions of New Age thinking and the Neo-theosophy of Alice Bailey, would locate the center of their being in an ID point or individuality center suspended above the crown of the head. But this is equally unbalanced, energetically speaking. Such people reject their present embodiment in human flesh, as well as their feelings and emotions, believing them to be associated with the so-called lower chakras, principally their sexual desires. Historically, this notion developed in the last century out of a Victorian sentimentality and prudishness with regard to both the feminine and the physical body. This sentimental puritanism particularly afflicted England and America and in many ways it still does. To the clairvoyant eye, such individuals develop a weak pale blue aura and become excessively ethereal, almost as if they were floating some several centimeters off the ground. Such spirituality represents a questionable spirituality and is not very helpful for realizing wholeness and integration. A genuine spirituality requires the individual to be grounded in the center of one's own being. Of course, there exist meditation practices in the Tibetan tradition, especially in Tantra, where higher spiritual energies, the blessings of the Buddhas and the Gurus, are invoked into this ID point or sphere of white light visualized above the crown of one's head. An important practice of purification is done in this manner. But then, these spiritual energies (byin-rlabs) are drawn down into one's body through the aperture at the crown of the head. Drawn down through the central channel, they come to be sealed into the lotus of one's own heart center. This center is the true temple or palace where the King who is Rigpa resides. He is not floating up there somewhere above the top of one's head, like a pale-blue hot air balloon.

[17] There exist certain Dzogchen practices which work in this way, the integrating of external space (phyi dbyings) and internal space (nang dbyings).

[18] On the meaning of "direct introduction" (ngo-sprod) in terms of Dzogchen, see my The Golden Letters, op. cit.

[19] Especially sadhana practice with the visualizations of the Peaceful and Wrathful deities (zhi khro). Oral communication from Lopon Tenzin Namdak.

[20] The visions seen in the Bardo of the Clear Light are reminiscent of the experiencing of the archetypes as described by C. G. Jung and which are said to reside in the collective unconscious psyche. Here, in the visions of the Bardo, the practitioner discerns structures in sacred space known as mandalas, but the interpretations of mandalas in Jung and in Tibetan thinking are not precisely the same. See C.G. Jung, Mandala Symbolism, Bollingen Series, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1973, and Man and His Symbols, Doubleday, New York 1964. Also see Giuseppe Tucci, The Theory and Practice of the Mandala, Samuel Weiser, New York 1973. The visions seen in the Bardo of Existence are also in part archetypal and transpersonal, but many are quite personal, the visual representations of the memories and the karma of the individual in question. This Bardo would largely correspond to the personal unconscious of the individual according to Freud and Jung.
[21] In Gnostic terms, this means ascension of the soul upward through the various heavens, or the seven planetary spheres of the Hebdomad, to become liberated beyond the Ogdoad, or eighth sphere, into the pure vision of the Pleroma, the primordial perfection, the archetypal world and sacred order of the Buddha Mandala. Or else, the soul descends downward through the planetary spheres to fall once more under the dominion of the dark demonic powers of the Archons, the planetary powers who rule the world below. This is the domain of karma or fate called Samsara and Heimarmene. These Archons or planetary powers that rule the human soul are, in terms of the Dharma, the kleshas, passions, or emotional defilements. Their chief is Mara, the lord of this world, the tempter and demon of ego delusion. He sits enthroned in the Mara Bhuvana, which is the summit of the Hebdomad, the highest among the seven planetary spheres, and also the summit of the Kamadhatu or Desire World. Wherefrom he descends into the worlds below to disturb meditating Yogins with thoughts of pride and lust, in order to distract their concentration (dhyana), lest they break free from the shackles of the passions and, relieved of their karmic burdens, ascend to the higher planes of existence and thereby attain enlightenment and freedom. Mara, the lord of desire and death, who is also known as Kamadeva, is depicted in Mithraic iconography as the lion-headed god of time, Aion or Areimenios, and in Gnosticism as Ialdabaoth. In the Bardo, he is encountered in many guises, such as the Judge of the Dead and the Lord of Karma. The Buddhist figure of Mara bears a remarkable similarity to the Devil as the tempter of Christ and to the Gnostic figure of Ialdabaoth or Saklas, the chief Archon, dwelling in the seventh planetary sphere or Hebdomad, who is the chief among the seven Archons or rulers of the lower world. This is the domain of the Heimarmene or astral fate, personified by the seven powers who represent the seven planets of Babylonian cosmology and science. As said previously, in Buddhism they correspond to the principal kleshas, the negative emotions or defiling passions, that come to dominate the psyche.

This is the cosmological or mythopoeic dimension, but in psychological terms for the individual, the entire cosmic drama of the original Creation and Fall occurs and reoccurs each time the individual dies and comes once more to experience the Bardo before rebirth into another physical embodiment or mode of existence. Indeed, this Fall occurred at the beginning of time, but more importantly it occurs repeatedly for the individual at the Boundary between death and the onset of the Bardo due to the existential defect of ignorance or lack of awareness (ma rig-pa). This defect, as a possibility, occurs within the Pleroma, the perfect wholeness of the beginning before creation, as a shadow or a doubt, and this existential ignorance is depicted mythopoeically as the fall of Sophia or Wisdom. She, as the Intellect, tries to create a world, in imitation of the Pleroma archetype, out of the Hyle or aqueous chaotic primordial matter below. But she attempts this without the partnership of her consort, Enlightened Awareness. The project is a failure and the Intellect becomes lost in a labyrinth of its own creation, which is but a dim reflection in the waters of chaos of the archetypal pattern of the Pleroma or Buddha Mandala. Yet, whereas Sophia as Intellect becomes a fallen woman, Sophia as Wisdom, the Perfection of Wisdom, the consort of the Buddha, represents the very pathway back to the source. However, for the individual sentient being, after experiencing the karmic fruition for each lifetime and dying once more, it is precisely this lack of gnosis or understanding that leads to the consequent failure to recognize the shining face of the Clear Light of Reality, called the Mother in Dzogchen and the Father in Gnosticism. This is the Inner Light, the Midnight Sun, encountered within the innermost adyton or sanctuary of one's own soul. And the failure to recognize the nature of this Light leads to downfall and coming once more under the dominion of the Archons, who are the kleshas and the poisons. The close connections between Dzogchen and certain Gnostic traditions, including Mithraism and Manicheanism, are clearly suggested by these schemata of Fall and Salvation.

On the similarities between Buddhism and Gnosticism, see Edward Conze, "Buddhism and Gnosis," in The Origins of Gnosticism: Colloquium of Messina, 13-18 April, 1966, Ugo Bianchi (ed), E.J. Brill, Leiden 1970; reprinted in Robert Segal (ed), The Allure of Gnosticism, Open Court, Chicago 1995, pp. 173-189. And also see Elaine Pagels, The Gnostic Gospels, Vintage Books, New York 1989. On Gnosticism in general, see Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity, Beacon Press, Boston 1963. And on Mithraism, see David Ulansey, The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries: Cosmology and Salvation in the Ancient World, Oxford University Press, New York 1989. I have studied this question more extensively in an unpublished study, Mystical Illumination in Gnosticism and Buddhist Tantra (unpublished).

Mythologically, the Bardo experience represents the descent of the soul into Hades or Duat, as the Ancient Egyptians called it, the underworld of the dead spirits and ancestors, through which the

sun, that is to say, Rigpa, takes passage every night. In the initiation into the Mysteries, the candidate is introduced to the Inner Light (Gr. epopteia) and prepared for the passage through the Otherworld to a spiritual rebirth. The same is done in the Mysteries of Dzogchen. On the nocturnal subterranean passage of the sun god Ra in the Heliopolitan theology of Anceient Egypt, see Rundle Clark, Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt, op. cit., and H. Frankfort, J. Wilson, and T. Jacobsen, Before Philosophy, op. cit. And on the Mysteries in general, see S. Angus, The Mystery Religions: A Study of the Religious Background of Early Christianity, Dover, New York 1975, Marvin Meyer, The Ancient Mysteries: A Source Book, ______ and also Walter Burkert, Ancient Mystery Cults, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA 1987.

[22] This is reminiscent of the threefold division of humanity found in the Gnostic tradition, namely, the division into those individuals who are spiritual or Gnostic in nature, the Pneumatikoi, and, therefore, predestined for salvation by their spiritual natures, those who are intermediate or psychic, the Psychikoi, who may follow either the path to salvation and celestial ascent or the path of descent into perdition, and those who are material, the Hylikoi, who are forever denied salvation because of their materialistic and earth-bound nature (hyle).

However, the Mahayana came to reject the notion of an Icchantika or Hylikos, that is, an individual or sentient being who is constitutionally incapable, by virtue of possessing a totally material or non-spiritual nature, of ascending the spiritual path to liberation beyond the stars. In the Gnostic tradition, following the lead of Babylonian astrology and cosmology, the stars of the firmament or the celestial sphere are the visible image of fate and karma. Rather, according to the Mahayana, all sentient beings, at the very core of their being, possess the Bodhichitta or spark of light that is totally transcendent and spiritual in its nature. But the face of Rigpa has become obscured by the thick clouds of ignorance and forgetfulness. This spark of light, or seed of celestial fire, that has fallen into physical embodiment and cyclical existence, is, indeed, Rigpa or intrinsic Awareness.

This Rigpa or Bodhichitta (byang-chub kyi sems) is at the center and core of one's existence as a sentient being (sems-can) and it represents the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid). By virtue of this Bodhichitta or Nature of Mind, there is no sentient being, no matter how low or degraded or ignorant in this present life, who is not capable eventually of attaining salvation or realizing Buddhahood. Buddhahood is both the essence and the potential of the Bodhichitta, it being the Nature of Mind. And it is to be discovered within one's own immediate experience at this present moment. It is ordinary and nothing special, because it has been there all the time; yet it is a hidden treasure and the most precious of jewels. This Rigpa or intrinsic Awareness, co-extensive with Kunzhi and pervading the entire dimension of existence, the Dharmadhatu, is inherent in being as such. There is no existence without it. It is the primordial Awareness (ye rig) and as such it pervades everywhere (khyab rig) through all of space and throughout all universes. But it is also embodied individually as sentient beings, as Awareness which is conscious (bsam rig). On this question, see my study of the Kun-gzhi zhal-shes above. Also see my forthcoming book on the Bonpo Mother Tantra, The Mandala of the Sun (forthcoming from Snow Lion, 1999).

[23] Many clairvoyants are able to see this subtle mind-made body which is the etheric double of the individual in question. The Ancient Egyptians knew it as the Ka and in modern Occultist and Neo-theosophical literature it is generally known as the Astral Body. On the etheric double and the astral body, see G.R.S. Mead, The Doctrine of the Subtle Body in Western Tradition, Quest, Wheaton IL 1967.

According to a number of traditions around the world, this subtle body remains in the vicinity of the corpse for approximately three days before departing or dissolving. It has also been seen on countless occasions hovering near the grave where the individual was recently buried as a kind of specter or ghostly shell devoid of consciousness. Usually the consciousness of the individual has already vacated this vehicle, having gone onward into the Bardo experience. In any event, this shell eventually dissolves into the surrounding atmosphere with the final dissipation of the residual prana or vital energy of the individual.

[24] Oral communication from Lopon Tenzin Namdak. On these picture cards and Bonpo funeral rites, see Per Kvearne, Bon Religion: A Death Ritual of the Tibetan Bonpos, Brill, Leiden 1985.

[25] The Bonpos possess a number of different versions of the Book of the Dead cycle and the Bar-do thos-grol, such as the Bru-lugs, the Hor-lugs, the Zhu-lugs, and so on. These differ in detail from the usual Buddhist version extracted from the Kar-gling zhi-khro cycle. On this latter cycle, see my book, Self-Liberation through seeing with Naked Awareness, Station Hill, Barrytown 1989. For translations of the the Bar-do thos-grol from this cycle, see W.Y. Evans-Wentz, The Tibetan Book of the Dead, Oxford University Press, London 1927, and Francesca Freemantle and Chogyam Trungpa, The Tibetan Book of the Dead, Shambhala, Berkeley 1975.

[26] On the Eleusinian Mysteries, see Carl Kerenyi, Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter, Bollingen Series, Princton 1967, George Mylonas, Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1961, and Gordon Wasson, C. Ruck, and A. Hoffmann, The Road to Eleusis, op. cit.

[27] For the Egyptian Book of the Dead in English translation, see E.A. Wallis Budge, The Egyptian Book of the Dead, University Books, New Hyde Park NY 1960, and Raymond Faulkner and Ogden

Goelet, The Egyptian Book of the Dead: The Book of the Going Forth by Day, Chronicle Books, San Francisco 1995.
[28] On the practice of Tummo, see W.Y. Evans-Wentz, Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines, op. cit. Tummo involves the suspension of breathing or holding the breath (kumbhaka, Tib. bum-can). This induces an experience of the three immobilities of the body, speech, and mind, which simulates hibernation, suspended animation, or even death. Some yogins in India, who have become masters of the practice of breath control or Pranayama, have been able to enter voluntarily into a state of suspended animation and even remain buried alive for a time. Later they are dug up and revived. On the symbolism of breathing, holding the breath, and immobility, see Mircea Eliade, Yoga: Immortality and Freedom, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1969.
[29] Some Dzogchen texts refer to the multidimensionality of Kuntu Zangpo as the six vast expanses (klong drug), but this number six is only conventional, because Kuntu Zangpo's dimensional extensions are actually beyond counting and can no more be enumerated than infinity itself. But symbolically, six, like four, eight, and ten, is a number suggestive of cosmic completion. And thus, one speaks of the six destinies of rebirth, although there exist, in actuality, an infinity of them. Some contemporary physicists have become interested in the multidimensionality and the deep structures of space, as well as the inexhaustible supply of energy locked into space itself. On this see John Davidson, The Secret of the Creative Vacuum: Man and the Energy Dance, C.W. Daniel, Saffron Walden UK 1989, and also see Michael Talbot, The Holographic Universe, op. cit.
[30] This long poem by Sir Edward Arnold was very popular in late Victorian times and purports to give an account of the life and teachings of the Buddha Shakyamuni. The poet suggests that the Buddha taught that Nirvana is just such a merging of the drop into the sea, the individual mind dissolving into the single universal mind. Indeed, many modern Neo-theosophists, including Evans-Wentz himself, interpret this extinction of individual consciousness as the ultimate goal of the Buddhist spiritual enterprise. For this, see W.Y. Evans-Wentz, The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation, Oxford University Press, London 1954. But this extinction of individuality into the oceanic One Mind is not the ultimate goal of Nirvana as defined in either Mahayana Buddhism or in Dzogchen. The Buddhist teachings on enlightenment, Nirvana, and Shunyata are far more subtle than this. If an enlightened being merely dissolved into the comfortable warm waters of the great cosmic ocean of the One Mind, that enlightened being would be of no further benefit to or influence on anyone. That being would merely be extinct and, therefore, non-existent. The Buddha would only be a memory in the minds of those left behind in Samsara. Such a Buddha is without compassion, and so, by definition, no Buddha at all. For a critique of this Neo-theosophical view from the Buddhist perspective, see my Self-Liberation through seeing with Naked Awareness, op cit.
[31] The Adyton is the innermost sanctuary in a classical temple. It might house the image of the deity or other sacred objects, such as in Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. In ancient times, during the course of one's initiation into the mysteries, the candidate was led through a series of totally dark chambers, symbolic of both death and the descent of the soul into the underworld and the conclusion of the rite, the candidate was exposed to a blinding light. This was known as the Epopteia or illumination, and represented symbolically the moment of revelation and transformation, even of apotheosis. This ritually simulated the experience of the manifestation of the Clear Light in the Bardo following the second death, that of the psyche. At this point in the ritual of initiation, the Hierophant revealed certain things and said certain things of which the candidate was forbidden to speak of to non-initiates on pain of punishment by the gods. But because of this hierophany, the candidate became a neophyte and gained access to immortality, that is, knowledge of the true immortality of the spirit.

The culmination of the initiation ritual was the revelation of the inner light at the core of one's being and the proof of the individual's celestial origin, what is known in Dzogchen as the Clear Light of Reality. With the famous Eleusinian Mysteries, it appears that, rather than some dramatic re-enactment of the death and rebirth experiences, the candidates for initiation were given a drink, kykeon, that was laced with ergot, in which LSD is the active ingredient. During the all night vigil inside the totally dark interior of the Telesterion, this psychedelic brought on visions of light. In this way, an experiential knowledge of the immortality of the spirit was gained. The candidate need no longer fear death. The initiations into the various mystery Cults of Antiquity were structured around the motifs of death and rebirth. Hence the similarities of the Mysteries, of which there were a number of such cults in Hellenistic and Roman times until their suppression by the triumphant Christian Church, to the Tibetan Books of the Dead. On the Mysteries in general, see S. Angus, The Mystery Religions, op. cit., Marvin Meyer, The Ancient Mysteries, op. cit., Walter Burkert, Ancient Mystery Cults, op. cit., John Ferguson, The Religions of the Roman Empire, ______, Robert Graves, The Golden Ass of Apuleius, The Pocket Library, New York 1954, and Gordon Wasson, C. Ruck, and A. Hoffmann, The Road to Eleusis, ibid.
[32] The two aspects or two sides of the Primordial Base which is the Natural State are its primordial purity (ka-dag), which is emptiness (stong-pa nyid), and its spontaneous self-perfection (lhun-grub), which is its clear luminosity (gsal-ba). Therefore, the Natural State, although having its emptiness side (stong-cha), equally has the inexhaustible potentiality to bring forth all possible forms on its clarity side (gsal-cha), including the Rupakaya, the pure luminous form of an enlightened being or Buddha. What specific forms emerge out of the Clear Light depend on secondary causes, such as the

purification of obscurations, both subtle and gross. When the clouds which are obscurations are removed or dissolved, the face of the sun, which is the Rupakaya, is revealed naturally and spontaneously. Thus, there is always present within any individual stream of consciousness the potentiality for enlightenment.

But, in the same way, because of the presence of residual karma that has not been purified, there exists always the probability of impure forms re-emerging out of the pristine state of emptiness. Nevertheless, the advent of these impure forms in no way taints or corrupts the Natural State, just as the reflections in a mirror, whether good or bad, beautiful or ugly, in no way change or modify the nature of the mirror (ma bcos-pa). Because the karma of an individual stream of consciousness is impressed or implanted within the very fabric of space itself, like the sowing of seeds in the earth of a fertile field, the individuality of that stream of consciousness re-emerges out of the space of the state of emptiness, initially as Clear Light. This process is only natural and it is unceasing (ma 'gags-pa). Like a mother, empty space gives birth to light and awareness incessantly. This represents the side of clear luminosity and spontaneous self-perfection. But the specific forms that these manifestations may take depends upon the karma of the individual.

Notes to the Commentary on the Nineteenth Little Nail

[1] On the sacred nature or hierophany of the sky and of the sun, see Mircea Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, ibid.

[2] On the question of confidence (gdeng) in relation to the practice of Dzogchen, see my The Golden Letters, Snow Lion, Ithaca 1996, pp. 106-119, 142, 279.

[3] In Western spiritual tradition, the best known example of the Body of Light and the manifestation of the Rainbow Body is the Transfiguration and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. After three days his tomb was opened and no physical remains were found. Nonetheless, he appeared to his disciples for forty days in a Body of Light in order to teach them the secrets of the Gnosis. There are found some close parallels in the life of Christ with those of Garab Dorje and Tapihritsa. See my The Golden Letters, ibid., pp. 177-189, 199-203. Although the Body of Light is pure luminosity and insubstantial, it is perceptible by all the senses, including touch. Thus, the disciples of Jesus, like those of Tapihritsa, were able to touch him with their hands.

[4] Even in recent times, there have been a number of Rainbow Bodies in Tibet, even cases witnessed by the Chinese authorities. See Chogyam Trungpa, Born in Tibet, George Allen & Unwin, London 1966. Shardza Rinpoche was an example in this century of the Rainbow Body among the Bonpos (1935). Normally, when a practitioner intends to manifest the Rainbow Body, he or she goes into a solitary retreat in a special hut which is not opened again until after seven days, so that the process of the dissolution and reversal of the physical elements of the body may complete itself undisturbed. In that case, only the hair, nails, and clothing are found because consciousness is thought not to reside in these items. However, on a number of occasions such a retreat has been prematurely interrupted and the shrunken body of the Lama was found inside the hut. A number of these miniaturized human bodies have been preserved in monasteries in Tibet as holy relics, as for example in Gyarong. Oral communication from Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche.

[5] Oral communication from Lopon Tenzin Namdak. Also on the Jalu and the Phowa Chenpo, see my The Golden Letters, op. cit. 1996, pp. 141, 159, 167-168, 192, 194.

[6] David Jackson briefly discuses the symbols of the lion cub and the Garuda with regard to instantaneous enlightenment and the delayed manifestation of enlightenment. See his article, "Birds in the Egg and New Born Lion Cubs: Metaphors for the Potentialities and Limitations of 'All-at-once' Enlightenment," IATS, Narita Conference, Japan 1990, pp. 1-23.

[7] De yang da-lta'i sgyu-lus 'di lta-bu ma yin te/ 'od kyi sku la mdun dang rgyab med/ phyogs dang mtshams med-par snang-ngo/ de'i phyogs bcu'i nam-mkha' la/ thig-le gur-khang grangs med-par 'char-ro/ de'i thig-le re re la yang gur-khang lnga lnga 'char te/ gur-khang lnga'i dbus na/ sku lnga lnga 'char-ro/ de rnams dang tshom-bu dang gral thabs kyi tshul du snang-ngo/ sku dang gur-khang de rnams kyang/ gzhan nas shar-ba ma yin te/ bdag-nyid kyi rig-pa la shar-ba'o/ de yang bdag gi tsi-ta'i dbus kyi 'od kyi sku tshon-gang gi 'char gzhi las/ phyogs bcu'i nam-mkha' la de ltar 'char-ro/ de yang gdos-pa sha'i tsi-ta ni ma yin/ snang-ba 'od kyi tsi-ta las shar-ba'o.

[8] Body and Gnosis (sku dang ye-shes) refer to extension and awareness which have been inseparable from the very beginning. They also have reference to Tantric practice where Body refers to the divine form of the meditation deity assumed and realized by way of the generation process (bskyed-rim) and Gnosis refers to the sense of actually being the deity in terms of feeling and sensation, realized by way of the perfection process (rdzogs-rim). This ultimate realization is known as the gnosis of bliss and emptiness (bde stong ye-shes).

[9] This refers to the culmination of the practice of Thodgal, the fourth stage in the development of vision (snang-ba bzhi), where all visions, both pure and impure, become exhausted and re-absorbed into the Natural State. This topic will be more thoroughly discussed in a subsequent volume. But needless to say, the Natural State, as the after death experience of the Bardo of Emptiness, does not represent a chill dark nothingness, a death of the spirit, as modern materialism would have it. Rather, it represents a state of pure potentiality, out of which, even following death or the exhaustion of visions, either the sacred order of Nirvana or the profane order of Samsara may re-emerge, depending on the presence or absence of gnosis. "Solve et coagula," as the Alchemists would say. The potentialities for both Samsara and Nirvana in their respective totalities are enfolded within

the very nature of Great Space understood as the Kunzhi or the state of Shunyata. On how the Dzogchen understanding of Shunyata as the great dimension of space (dbyings), not to be confused with ordinary geometric space which is only a limited case, and as pure potentiality (lhun-grub), might be compared to the implicate order elucidated by the physicist David Bohm, see his Wholeness and the Implicate Order, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1980. Also see Michael Talbot, The Holographic Universe, Harper Collins, San Francisco 1991, especially pp. 32-55; as well as Ken Wilber (ed), The Holographic Paradigm, New science Library, Boulder CO 1982. As was the case with synchronicity, C.G. Jung would probably take this as another incident of the convergence of the spiritual and the physical at this time in human history and the evolution of human consciousness. On this convergence in general, see Marilyn Ferguson, The Aquarian Conspiracy, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1981.

[10] The illusion body (sgyu-lus) is a miniature subtle body in the form of one's Yidam constructed in one's heart by way of the extensive practice during one's lifetime of the generation process (bskyed-rim) and the perfection process (rdzogs-rim). In many ways, this subtle body represents the culmination of the practice of Tantric transformation. At the time of death, when the physical body dies, the practitioner transfers one's consciousness into this subtle body and survives in the Bardo in this form. Then through transformation practice, one is able to choose consciously one's future rebirth. However, this illusion body is still impure and does not represent real liberation, because the mind-stream remains afflicted with many subtle layers of obscuration.

[11] Oral communication from Lopon Tenzin Namdak.

[12] Oral communication from Lopon Tenzin Namdak.

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